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ABSTRACT

This document suggests an agenda for restructuring New York City elementary schools and improving their leadership, based on interviews with 25 inner-city elementary school principals. Participants were selected on the basis of their competence and their commitment to the education of economically disadvantaged students. The following policy and action options for restructuring are emphasized: (1) collaboration of school and nonschool groups to foster a unified approach; (2) focus on success for all children and changing teaching practices; (3) adequate time, funds, and technical assistance for restructuring activities; (4) reducing school size; (5) linkage of governance to restructuring; and (6) provision of an adequate budget. The following policy options for the selection, support, and removal of principals are emphasized: (1) development of leadership criteria; (2) improvement of the selection process, including involvement of parents, teachers, and civic groups; (3) long-range development of future principals; (4) support for new and experienced principals, including increased support staffs; (5) deemphasis of paperwork and bureaucratic procedures; and (6) development of a new framework and procedure for removing principals. (FMW)

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*Improving Inner-City Elementary Schools
Report on Interviews with 25 NYC Principals*

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Principals Speak

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REPORT # 1

Restructuring Schools

School-Based Management/Shared Decision-Making
Home/School/Community Partnership

School Leadership

Selecting, Supporting, and Removing Principals

By David S. Seeley, John H. Niemeyer, Richard Greenspan

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Preface

This is Report #1 of *Principals Speak*, a study based on interviews with 25 New York City inner-city elementary school principals about what is needed to educate poverty-area children successfully. When the *Principal Speak* study was begun in the Spring of 1988, New York City had no announced program for "restructuring" its schools. Although this type of reform, involving such concepts as "school-based management," "shared decision-making" and "partnership" within the school and with parents and community, was being advocated by reformers and reform commissions, and was actually being tried in some parts of the country and in some New York City schools, it was still not a major policy initiative in the city school system.

This situation changed in January, 1990, when a new Chancellor, Joseph A. Fernandez, assumed leadership of the New York City public schools, with an announced program for "school restructuring." Because of the urgent need for understanding and promoting discussion of this new approach to school reform, we decided not to wait for the entire *Principal Speak* study to be ready for publication, but to publish first the two sections of the report that deal most directly with the issues involved in the school system's effort to change the "structure" of its schools. The first of these sections addresses the general question of restructuring (including school-based management, and shared decision-making and collaboration with community agencies). The second, on School Leadership, deals with the critically important role of the school principal in determining whether or not any restructuring effort will be successfully implemented and achieve the goal of substantially improved education for children.

Things are moving fast in New York City. There are many issues to be dealt with if restructuring's ultimate goal—better education for children and youth—is to be won. All the other parts of our study are also related to the restructuring of the system: those dealing with teachers and teaching, parent involvement, drugs, emotional and health problems of students, expectations and testing, remedial and bilingual education, and the need for basic materials and an enriched curriculum. The principals in our study had important things to say about all of them. Subsequent reports of *Principals Speak* will cover these topics.

In the meantime, action on restructuring has already begun, generating anxiety and controversy as well as thoughtful support and anticipation. We hope that the observations of the principals, as well as our analysis and recommendations, will make at least a modest contribution to widespread, intelligent discussion of the issues involved.

The Principals Speak Project

American education is awash in reform proposals. Many voices have been heard—State governors, legislators, corporate executives, teachers unions, parent groups, researchers, and a wide array of reform commissions, and now even the President of the United States! One group from which too little has been heard is *school principals*, a group which is key to school success and indeed to successful implementation of school reform.

To tap the knowledge of this group, the *Principals Speak* study conducted in-depth interviews with 25 inner-city principals in New York City who were identified as being committed and effective leaders of their schools.

Why Inner-City Schools?

The study focuses on inner-city public schools because they have proved the most intractable to reform and because we believe continued failure in this area confronts American society with the most serious social, economic, political, and indeed moral problems. There is no sector of American life where the denial of the most fundamental entitlement to equal opportunity, not to mention simple fairness and humanity, is so widespread, palpable, and dangerous to our country's future—and therefore so inexcusable.

Why Elementary Schools?

The primary reason for focusing on elementary schools is our belief that a sound elementary school education can provide the basis for future educational success, reduce dropouts, and in general avert the "educational failure and lifelong dependency faced by thirty percent of the nation's children" cited by the Committee for Economic Development [CED] in its 1987 report, *Children in Need*.

An elementary education that results in children's going to middle and junior high school without the skills and attitudes required for at least minimum success in those grades almost guarantees school failure. The resulting harm to individuals and the nation was stated powerfully in the CED report:

Currently fewer than 50 percent of high school seniors read at levels considered adequate for carrying out even moderately complex tasks, and 80 percent have inadequate writing skills...Not only are our public schools failing to develop basic skills, they are failing to develop the high-order skills needed for the new information age. Allowing this to continue will not only impoverish these children, it will impoverish our nation—culturally, politically, economically.

The monetary cost of this failure to educate for *each year's* class of dropouts is estimated by the CED at "more than \$240 billion in lost earnings and foregone taxes over their lifetimes. This does not include billions more for crime control and for welfare, health care and other social services that this group will cost our nation."

A major place to stop this hemorrhaging of our human resources—and indeed our humanity—is in the elementary school.

The CED also stressed the importance of elementary schools from another perspective:

There is little sense in giving disadvantaged children a Head Start if the schools that await them fail to provide the kind of quality educational programs that can reinforce the early processes.

In New York City, the inner-city elementary schools reading scores, although an imperfect measure, nevertheless tell a story that cannot be ignored. For example, the May, 1989 reading scores in a typical poverty district shows its elementary schools having between 49.4% and 81.9% of their students below grade level. And that figure is even more troubling when we realize that there is an additional large number of students who are at or just slightly above grade level who also will probably lack the academic skills needed for junior high school. Anyone familiar with these pre-high school grades knows that it is here that the first clear signs of the future dropout problem can be seen—a problem that in some high schools has resulted in a dropout rate as high as 80%.

Why Principals?

The primary reasons our study focused on principals were that 1) they are vital for the effective running of a school, and 2) they are key factors in successfully implementing changes in the way schools are run. It is not assumed that their views are always right, but we believe they have a particularly valuable perspective on the overall problems and needs in a school because of their singular responsibility, day-in and day-out, for mobilizing the resources of school and community—staff, parents, community members and students themselves—for educating a school's pupils.

Furthermore, they are in a pivotal position at this time. There is increasing realization that the school site is the primary locus for change and therefore for invention, collaboration and decision-making. Principals will have to assume an even greater leadership role than they now carry—a role that itself will keep evolving as teacher, parent, community and student involvement changes in the future. It would be folly to ignore the insight and practical knowledge of these front-line administrators as we move toward serious school reform.

Study Design

Selection of Principals: The 25 principals in the study were identified on the basis of recommendations by parents, educational groups, college educators, and other principals. We were seeking principals of inner-city elementary schools who had demonstrated competence and a commitment to the successful education of the children of their schools despite the social conditions affecting them. The resulting group consisted of 18 women and 7 men. Of these, 11 were African American, 8 Hispanic, 1 Oriental, and 5 White. All had had many years of experience in the New York City school system: as teachers, guidance counselors, bi-lingual administrators, staff members of district and

central offices, assistant principals, and principals. All but two had been principals for from five to fifteen years.

Characteristics of the Schools: All of the selected schools were poverty schools, i.e., listed as Chapter 1 target schools by the Board of Education. They were located in 13 school districts, in neighborhoods that read like a roster of New York's poverty areas: Harlem, East Harlem, the South Bronx, East New York, Bedford Stuyvesant, Sunset Park, South Jamaica. They range in size as follows: 5 schools under 600 pupils; 16 between 600 and 999; and 4 very large ones, with over 1600 pupils. The student population of the schools was mostly African American and Hispanic. Twenty-one schools had from 91% to 99.5% African American and Hispanic enrollment. Eleven of these had a majority of African Americans, and 10 had a majority of Hispanics. Two other schools had over 83% African Americans and Hispanics, with the balance being Whites and Orientals. Of the remaining two schools, one had over 75% Oriental pupils, with the balance mostly Hispanics and African Americans; the other was almost evenly divided between Hispanics, African Americans, and Whites.

Interview Process: Assured anonymity, the principals agreed to open ended, two-to-three hour, taped interviews. They also were generous in making themselves available for later follow-up interviews to clarify issues and provide up-to-date information. Two basic questions were posed: 1) What would be needed for your school to be able to educate all your students successfully? 2) What are your views on the proposed reform measures, Shared Decision-Making and School-Based Management?

The principals spoke to these questions in terms of their day-by-day school experiences, always with candor, often with passion. The more than 3000 pages of transcriptions of the interview tapes were then analyzed by the researchers and organized into the sections of the overall report. (The first two sections, Restructuring Schools and School Leadership, are organized here as Report #1.)

A Package Not a Panacea

It should come as no surprise that the principals in this study did not come up with a simple, single remedy for the significant improvement of inner-city education. Rather, these interviews confirm what most sophisticated school reformers have been saying in recent years, that comprehensive reform in a variety of related areas is needed to make a significant difference in the education of inner-city children. The areas discussed by the principals covered a wide range of problems confronting elementary schools, especially inner-city schools like their own: the quality of teachers and teaching; the health and emotional needs of their children; testing; accountability; meeting the needs of non-English speaking children; home-school relations; the need for collaboration with community agencies; the waste in some of the current funding procedures; truancy and transiency; handling the deluge of paper work required of teachers and administrators; the need for simple, basic things like books and equipment, unbroken window panes, and space for physical education; and the two specific questions on Shared Decision-Making and School-Based Management.

The principals did not address a number of other important areas that must be considered in any discussion of school reform, such as parent, student and teacher choice of schools and programs; new procedures for teacher education and certification; new patterns of governance and monitoring at the federal, state, and local levels; reform of curriculum, school organization, and teaching methods. However, what they did say provides important contributions to the agenda for reform, contributions that have immediacy and urgency.

Social Conditions and the School's Mission

The principals' descriptions of the social and economic problems of their neighborhoods that impede children's learning in school vividly illuminate the difficulties our inner-city schools face in trying to educate many of their children successfully. The principals see clearly that the school cannot eliminate for its students all the detrimental impact upon education of the scourge of crack, the stresses of poverty, or the problem of a dissolving family life. But the principals make clear that schools can play a critically important role. One principal stated this forcefully: "We cannot change the community. We cannot change the drug problem out there. But we have to be able to help the child function within this place, our school. And then we must prepare him in some measure for the world. . . . We have to see that each child feels that there is a place in his or her life that is safe, that is caring—a place where people are concerned and want him or her to do better. They have to get this message from us."

Analysis and Policy/Action Options

When we undertook this project, we committed ourselves not only to report the principals' interviews, but to analyze the issues they raised and to suggest policies and actions to deal with them. Each section of the report, therefore, consists of two parts: the first, a presentation of the principals' interviews, with emphasis upon direct quotations; the second, the researchers' analysis of the issues, followed by policy and action options.

Our analysis of the structural causes of the serious weaknesses in our present educational system indicated the need for many policy changes at all levels: the federal government, the state legislature and educational apparatus, city and district boards, staff unions, and educational organizations. Some of these suggestions require long-term strategies and implementation. Others, however, call for immediate (and we believe very practicable) action to reduce the tragic effect of our current practices upon the lives of tens of thousands of children in our inner-city schools.

There is wide recognition that our public schools must become dramatically more effective than they are now if our society is to remain strong and democratic. We fear, however, that there is insufficient understanding of the nature of the problems that must be addressed—and therefore the "solutions" proposed are often too simplistic. We hope that the testimony of the 25 men and women interviewed in this study—leaders facing the real problems on a day-to-day basis—together with our analysis and suggestions for policy options and action, will help promote the widespread dialogue, advocacy, negotiation, and institutional invention and experimentation now needed for rebuilding our system of public education on a sound basis.

Principals Speak on:

Restructuring Schools

Restructuring Schools

Although "restructuring" has become a favorite "buzz" word of today's school reform movement, it was not the term used by the principals in this study to describe how to make inner-city schools successful. Yet many of the practices and attitudes they saw as needed relate to reforms that are now being promoted under the name of "restructuring." At the same time they provided important insights that must be taken into account if such "restructuring" reforms as School-Based Management (SBM), Shared Decision-Making (SDM), and home-school-community partnership are to be implemented successfully.



School-Based Management

The principals felt strongly that more decisions have to be made at the school level—both to ensure that the best decisions are made and to give the school a sense of ownership and accountability in carrying them out. Their statements on this issue were clearest in regard to staff selection and special programs such as Chapter 1, but they were not limited to these two areas of management and decision-making.

Staff Selection

"I would like to have a chance to select my own personnel," was Principal W's concise way of expressing a view held widely by these principals. Indeed, lack of control over staffing was a source of intense frustration for the principals when pressed as to what they needed to educate their children successfully.

"I have gotten rid of some of the worst teachers on the face of the earth only to turn around and be sent worse ones. I got rid of a teacher who never showed up and she was immediately replaced by a teacher who showed up but drove the students away," reported Principal U, adding that "Hiring and firing is an absolute." "You know,"

Principal Q said toward the end of her interview, "We've been talking for about two hours, and I forgot the thing I think is the most important of all: that the principal have the authority to select his or her staff. We have no jurisdiction over our staff. . . . The first thing you must have—any system must have—is to be able to hire and (I hate to use the word) fire. You must have some say over who's in your building. You cannot tell me I have to accept everybody that walks through the door simply because they have a file number and they passed the test. That's what's happening here."

"The first thing you must have—any system must have—is to be able to hire and (I hate to use the word) fire. You must have some say over who's in your building."

Principal T tried to express the same point more gently: "Perhaps two or three of the teachers would find it to their advantage to—you know, find other schools where they would be more successful." When the interviewer pressed him, "You'd like to fire 2 or 3 of the teachers?" he replied more directly: "I ought to, yes."

Their sense of powerlessness on this issue comes through in Principal F's story about a teacher she "had been trying for years" to get rid of: "You know how he got out? He hit a kid and the parent got him out of here. It wasn't my prerogative. I'd been down to the Chancellor about this guy hitting a kid more than once—more than once. And I was not able to get rid of him. But one parent pursuing it was able to. And you talk about prerogatives? That's dangerous stuff, right?"

Or in Principal K's story about how she was sent an incompetent counselor by the district ("He didn't know how to even read students' records"), and when she complained to the district, the district responded by removing the counselor and providing no counseling services at all!

The principals would like more input in selecting assistant principals and other staff as well as teachers: "I would like to have input in who will become my new assistant principals. [Instead] the District will place someone here as acting AP and then the job will be advertised" and filled by the District.

"I have gotten rid of some of the worst teachers on the face of the earth only to turn around and be sent worse ones."

Funded Programs

Another area about which the principals emphasized the need for school-based decision-making was the implementation of special remedial or compensatory programs funded by the state or federal government. They see a lot of waste in these programs because the expenditure of the funds is controlled by decisions and regulations made by distant bureaucrats with little relation to the needs of the children in their schools.

When Principal S heard he was going to get eleven Chapter I remediation teacher positions, he proposed to his district that his large school, with many new classroom teachers, would get greater benefit from using seven of these positions for teacher trainers. Likewise, he wanted to use one position for a second guidance counselor to help with the large number of children with emotional problems in his school. He wasn't listened to.

Principal J also wanted to use Chapter I

moneys for a guidance person for the same reasons. He was told Chapter I regulations wouldn't permit it. Principal G said she was sent ten paraprofessionals under Chapter I, but that in her very overcrowded school she had enough paras and couldn't really use the additional ones productively. She, too, would rather have had a guidance counselor. Another principal had a similar experience: She got nine new paraprofessionals: "I could have managed without them." She would have preferred to use the funds for guidance services.

Principal AA, on the other hand, reflecting different priorities, wanted *more* paraprofessionals to increase the adult-child ratio, "so more children would be given closer adult attention."

One principal wanted to use his Chapter I funds solely in the lower grades, "because I thought that if you prevent remediation, then you won't need remediation." He was told this was contrary to Chapter I guidelines. He felt so strongly that he pushed his district superintendent into allowing him to do it. In this instance school-based management won out, but he says he got "flogged" for it, and all sorts of anxiety was created because of an impending audit of the program.

"...if you prevent remediation, then you won't need remediation."

Principal F also favored early success over later remediation, and proposed that the "Gates" program, which provides smaller classes of 17 to 20 children starting in the fourth grade, be started in the second grade instead. "Fourth grade is too late, as far as I'm concerned. The kids have gone past the point of no return because they're getting into higher levels of skills of reading by fourth grade, and it's too late to start remediation."

Principal S wanted more flexibility in organizing the subjects for remediation, rather

than rigid, separate programs for reading, math, ESL, etc. "I need teams that provide remediation in different subjects." Principal G told of how she was given extra teaching positions under Project Child in the middle of the year ("The Board has a tendency to institute programs in the middle of a school year after all the teachers have been selected."), when she had no space to put them in her overcrowded school. There was no way to use the money productively; the school could better have used it for something else.

Principal AA summed up a general complaint, shared by many of the others, that principals have too little say in how these funds are used: "I have never been asked (in over 15 years as a principal) what I think about which funded programs should be in the school."

Need for School-Level Autonomy

Beyond decisions about staffing and funded programs, the principals expressed a general need for decision-making at the school level: "One of the things we've always said [in our school] is that somehow we wish we had more autonomy. We're constrained by district mandates, union rules, downtown and state mandates. We don't mind your setting minimum standards, but if we had a little more freedom. . ."

We don't mind you setting minimum standards, but if we had a little more freedom. . ."

"One of the problems we encounter in educating our children is that the district superintendent has too much control over school planning," said Principal S. "One of the things that has to be done is to leave the schools alone to have autonomy in decision-making. I don't care if they said, 'You're not an effective principal based on this evaluation we have done; you're going to lose your job.' I don't care about that. But I need

"I have never been asked [in over 15 years as a principal] what I think about which funded programs should be in the school."

to have the autonomy in order to do the job." This principal believes district offices should be "management systems to lend support to the planning process within each of the schools, rather than to take [away] the powers and responsibilities of the school."

Principal K sees her district office primarily as an officious (and unproductive) intermeddler: "I get tired of district people coming into the school trying to tell you how to run your school. These so-called 'coordinators' will come and stay five to 10 minutes; then they will go back and meet with the Deputy Superintendent or the people at the district, and the next thing you know you're having to explain why you're doing something that this person doesn't even understand." Principal F said, "When I have problems, I'm reluctant to go to the district because I don't feel I'm going to get any help. I haven't ever, so I have no reason for believing that I will." Although some principals shared these negative views of their district offices, others had more positive experiences. One has received considerable help from his district office on staff development; another in increasing the educational aspirations of his community.

Principal H perhaps went the furthest in calling for school-level autonomy: "I'm suggesting that a principal who is a 'decision-maker' in his or her building might say, 'This district-mandated program doesn't fit the needs of my school.' If a principal has those feelings, then indeed, he or she should be held accountable for the results if he or she says this is what I would like to put in place [instead]. . . I would like to be given the budget for my school and told, 'This is the amount of money you have to run your

school. You can pick whatever personnel, whatever services you want. You must live within that budget. You determine how you want it spent.' If I were given the budget, I would have to make cuts in other places, . . . I would have to phase. I might say that some of the supplies, books or equipment that were given [were lower priority]. I might not need an extra two projectors, but if I'm given money for them and told, 'Spend the money, otherwise you lose it,' I'm going to buy the projectors. But if you say that it's non-categorical aid and I can spend it as I see fit, then I will be able to say, 'Well, this is my plan, and that's what I want to spend the money for because I believe I can get the best results doing it that way.'"

"The paperwork is horrendous."

Some of the principals explained how school-based decision-making would contribute to efficiency as well as effectiveness: "Why should I spend \$1.50 when I can get something for \$1.00? We pay double for everything." "If you had a really great plan—a comprehensive plan" you couldn't get it funded. "The system finds it very difficult to break away from its little ways of giving \$2000 to this program and \$3000 to that program. And so what it has is all these fragmented little cockamamie programs out there that can't do what has to be done."

"The special projects that were supposed to make life so much better in the schools have created more paper work. I'm sure you've heard this a million times, but I've got to say it at least once: The paperwork is horrendous."

Summing up an over-all view of school-based management, Principal Y believes that, the "real challenge" in turning New York City's schools around is going to be what the the system can do to "encourage and to lend its resources to enable schools to plan and do things on their own—to use the power that the central board has to make

effective decision-making at a local level a reality." At the same time, while he sees the need to reduce "the rigidity which is being imposed more and more" from above, he also sees the need for a reciprocal accountability at the school level: "to be held legitimately to a standard in terms of what we should accomplish within the course of a year, or other period of time."

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Shared Decision-Making

While the principals were clear on wanting more decisions to be made at the school level, they were less clear on who should make them and how they should be made. Many had reservations about current proposals for "shared decision-making," related mainly to questions about accountability, possible delays in making decisions on pressing issues, and fears about the unreadiness and self-interest of potential participants. Virtually all agreed, however, that there was a need for more communication, collaboration, and sense of common purpose, and several were strong advocates for sharing decisions with teachers.

"...all these fragmented little cockamamie programs out there that can't do what has to be done."

Positive Views of Shared Decision-Making

"I liked it from its inception," said Principal G. "I saw teachers who were sort of lingering on the vine who, when they became part of the CSIP [Comprehensive School Improvement Program] committee, became alive and really made meaningful suggestions." Principal V said, "I think it is one of the most effective things that has happened to this particular school... It gives [teachers] a sense of power over their environment." "If I don't have any voice in setting [a policy]," pointed out Principal Q in describing its effect on teacher motivation, "then I also

don't really care if it works or not. I'm doing it because you're the boss, and you say I have to do it." "To me, the idea of shared decision-making is outstanding," said one principal, "because it allows me to get ten times more mileage from the staff." "I believe in the concept" said Principal W, "because part of the problem is that teachers and administrators have separated themselves, and teachers have not taken their real role in the educational system".

The theme of increased productivity was also cited by Principal AA: "I don't think it's peculiar to education; industry too is talking about shared decision-making. . . . There's definitely something to the argument that the person who is closest to the product has to have some input."

Some discussed shared decision-making in terms of increased collaboration. "I think there has to be a collaborative effort on the part of any school . . . How could it be negative if they're all pushing for the same thing?" asked Principal F. Principal J agreed: "When you have the teachers as part of the team and there's ownership among the teachers and the principal and the mission, and everybody is working together in a team effort, it helps; you're using the power of everybody. That's what you call power."

". . .the idea of shared decision-making is outstanding because it allows me to get ten times more mileage from the staff."

This was corroborated by Principal AA: "If teachers felt that they had more to say about what they do in the classroom, or whatever their job assignment is, feeling more ownership . . . they would do a better job delivering the program." Principal W pointed out that shared decision-making can change basic relationships: "The whole thing is that it will bring about better relationships between the home, the child, and the school."

Others discussed shared decision-making as a source of good ideas: "You get a different perspective when you listen to the various members of the committee based upon their knowledge and their background . . . It's very helpful to have someone share their thinking with you and with others so that we all can begin to look at what is best for the children and how other people might view a program or an activity—to really brainstorm together and solve problems," said Principal K. As Principal R put it:

"I think it is one of the most effective things that has happened to this particular school. . . It gives [teachers] a sense of power over their environment."

"Working together helps my school articulate needs and address those needs . . . That's very important." "My operational style is to consult," said Principal M. On a particular subject she might have an idea of what should be done, "but I would want to sit down with some classroom teachers and parents . . . I do not assume that their ideas will be the same as mine."

Some of the results of such a collegial approach were quite concrete: "One committee is constantly giving us feedback on what we can do in terms of improving school 'tone'—rules and regulations, announcements to make to the students . . . Another committee worked on and helped implement the schoolwide independent reading program . . ." reported Principal J. Principal U stated, "I've gotten some of the best ideas from teachers. . . . We do a lot of things together. We're going to brainstorm this whole reading crisis as a group."

Principal W described how she introduced an early childhood program, not by giving the staff her plans, but by having them visit

other programs, discussing what they saw, and then planning together their own program. "They came up with ideas I had not thought of that were excellent," she reported.

Principal K reported on how her school improvement committee began to focus on improving science in her school, "and then the following year we were able to implement some of our recommendations. That was very, very helpful. Also the student clubs came out of the school improvement committee. We felt that the children should have something other than just pure academics—some way to get academics through other modes. So it was through the clubs that we began to emphasize some of the content work that the children had learned." She explained how mainstreaming was expanded through the work of the committee: "We wanted to try to find a way to get the special ed teacher and the regular ed teachers to work more closely together. . . . [As a result] we mainstream all of our children."

"Working together helps my school articulate needs and address those needs."

Some principals spoke of shared decision-making simply as the proper way to run a school and to treat professionals: "[Teachers'] input is absolutely crucial for the school and for the children to improve," said Principal R. "It's an important element of a good school—a school that works." "Teachers are the ones who are teaching the curriculum, so certainly they should be involved in that. Absolutely. They're the professionals," said Principal Q.

"You know, this is not the Army; this is a school," commented Principal T. "We're talking about intelligent people who have licenses, who have a say. They're the ones who are going to be affected if you choose a basal reading program; they're the ones who are going to teach it."

"When . . . everybody is working together in a team effort, it helps; you're using the power of everybody. That's what you call power."

Concerns About Shared Decision-Making

Despite the strong backing from these principals for collaborative team effort to accomplish shared objectives, many of them had concerns about how "shared decision-making" would be defined and implemented.

Accountability. The most often mentioned problem was that, since principals are held accountable for their schools, they must have the final authority for making decisions. As Principal D put it, "Ultimately, since the responsibility is mine, the decision has to be mine as well." Principal I echoes this view: "Since I am ultimately responsible for whatever happens to the school, I will certainly take everything under advisement—in consultation—but the ultimate decision becomes my decision. That is what it has to be."

The nature of the system's accountability structure was stressed in Principal AA's comments: "Supervisors are the only people who are accountable in New York City and as long as I am accountable, I will insist that I have the final decision. The superintendent is my rating officer, and unless I pro-

"They came up with ideas I had not thought of that were excellent. . ."

duce what the superintendent, in consultation with the school board, decides I should be producing, I will be out, as will other supervisors. But that same yardstick does not apply to teachers. So therefore, in the shared decision-making process, I, as the

primary accountable person on staff, would insist that my voice be stronger than others. But I'm not against shared decision-making, mind you."

Creating Bottle-Necks. Several principals raised concerns about shared decision-making slowing down decisions and reforms. "One of the problems is that, as I foresee it, shared decision-making can be used as an excuse for not making decisions," said Principal Y. Principal J brought up the problem that, "to some degree the best way to kill an idea is to send it to a committee. So basically I believe you have to be very, very careful with shared decision-making". As Principal AA summed up, "You can't run any organization, certainly not the size of this one, by having a vote about everything you want to do."

Narrow Perspectives. "Most teachers have a tunnel view of a school, based on their immediate experiences in the classroom. They don't see the global picture. Also, I have found after years of dealing with teachers that they don't keep up with the latest educational research." Principal P, like several of the others, saw this as leading to a relatively narrow perspective on the part of many teachers.

A few principals expressed concern that many teachers wouldn't be interested in the process. "You know, some of them are just as happy to let me run the place. They do their job—I'm not saying they're incompetent or insensitive—but they feel their job is to do the curriculum in the classroom, and they don't want to have any part of this planning or goal setting, or anything else like that," said Principal Y. Or, as Principal J put it, "Teachers aren't dropping dead panting for shared decision-making . . . they don't want to come out of class and sit around and be policy-makers." Principal P was even more emphatic about the negative effect of teacher attitudes on shared decision-making: "Most teachers could care less."

Principal BB warned that too often the main intent of teacher input is "to remove certain children from the classroom, and in this school, when you talk about 'problem

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children', you're talking primarily about Black and Hispanic kids."

Union Power Play. A few principals raised the concern that some of the current movement toward more teacher decision-making in New York was more of a union power play or political issue than a genuine effort to improve schools: "In terms of teachers becoming administrators, quite frankly I think it's a crock . . . I think it's a big union ploy. Because the teachers union has been unable to get teachers better working conditions . . . or raise salaries, what do they do? They have a free benefit: You can take on some clerical duties in addition to the ones you have—you can order your own materials." Principal I put it more in terms of power: "It is not shared decision-making the union wants, as

**"... shared decision-making
can be used as an excuse
for not making decisions."**

much as they want to make the decisions. And that I cannot have. I can't just let them say unilaterally that this is what they want."

Principal Y expressed his concern that shared decision-making has "become a popular rallying cry without really much definition as to what it means, and, unfortunately, in many cases, before we get a chance to try it out and find out what we can do, it becomes a political slogan or a means of expanding the power base of one particular group or another."

Principal D saw some aspects of "shared decision-making"—if it meant simply "union power"—as undermining the responsibility of the principal and working against school-based decision-making: "We fought tooth and nail for a good mentoring pro-

gram, but we have a district mentoring advisory committee which is dominated by seven members of the UFT and only three members who are principals. This committee selects the mentors. They do not even go back and ask the principal who he thinks is best . . . [They] refused to agree that principals, who are building chiefs, should tell you who would be the best mentor to assist those uncertified teachers. It's a disgrace!"

"Teachers aren't dropping dead panting for shared decision-making . . . Most teachers could care less."

The concerns of some principals about power related directly to their views about the importance of the principal's leadership in running a successful school: "Basically, I'm in agreement with [shared decision-making], and I think we have been doing it," said Principal AA, but "I firmly believe that a principal has to stand for something. . . I have tried to make a definite statement that I'm child-oriented and a humanist who wants children to learn to the maximum extent possible. If we talk in terms of sheer numbers, . . . the principal can easily be outvoted, and I can see it being carried to the extent that the principal is administering an educational program that he doesn't feel very supportive of. So, while I like the basic idea of shared decision-making, I would caution that a balance be reached between the programs that the principal feels are important and those that the staff may feel are important."



Planning Time and Support

A major concern of the principals was the lack of time for collaborative planning and team building. "There's no time to discuss the problems," said Principal N. "Even the UFT Chapter Chairperson said to me, 'How can they talk about ownership when the teachers come in at 8:30 and clock out at 3? Where's the time in the day for this?'" She reported her district as unsympathetic to the need for more time: "When we came up with

suggestions for a staff retreat, the district staff made it seem like this was unnecessary; there were no funds to do this shared decision-making."

"It was foolhardy to think that these committees were going to make policy and implement policy, and they were only going to do this on their stinking two hours a month that they're allotted to do it," said Principal J. Principal Q agreed: There is no time built into the school day for you to meet with various committees. You need at least two hours a week. "One of the big enemies is time."

"The things we do in our School Improvement Committee are good; they're really good," said principal C, "but there's not sufficient time to meet. We meet only once a month after school between 3:00 and 4:00, or early in the morning, or at lunchtime. That is not a good time. It should be once a week and it should be quality time."

[Shared decision-making has] "become a popular rallying cry without really much definition as to what it means. . ."

"I would need time with staff to be able to plan," said Principal Y, "time for staff to be able to think, time for staff to be able to implement what it is we've decided we want to do together, time to be able to share my goals and ideas and be able to listen to them say the things they want to do," said Principal Y.

Principal N expressed a similar concern: "We need a retreat twice a year, as they do in business, to promote a spirit, . . . to decide our priorities. Shared decision-making is

". . . there were no funds to do this shared decision-making."

OK, but without the time to do it, forget it."

"In industry," Principal Y summed up, "there's an understanding of the need for people to be able to talk, to get away . . . planning time." The principals did not see the school system run in this way. They spoke of the need not only for more time, but for more resources and support from above for school-based collaboration to work effectively:

Principal H spoke of his experience with the Local School Development Program, an effort by the New York Urban Coalition a few years ago to promote school-based collaboration: "It was a very good program. It set up committees and taught them how to work. Parents were involved, and you had charts going all over the place—and meetings—and you got lunch! And we had a retreat, and we were going to do all these marvelous things. But they didn't have the money and personnel to back up the programs they were helping us design. And we were supposed to be doing all this within the same school day, which you can't do. You can't do it."

Resources to Support Planning

Principal V spoke of his frustration in not having the resources to implement the plans needed for his children's success: "I think we need to look at schools as a place where the principal should have a right to call in some financial resources when he needs them. If I'm developing computer programs, for

"Shared decision-making is OK, but without the time to do it, forget it."

example, and I believe that one of the concepts in computers is access—that the child should be able, at certain times when he gets an idea, to have access—suppose I wanted to have 2 or 3 computers in every room, I should be able to do that. Or suppose I felt the need, as I still do, for foreign language and I needed a laboratory and I could prove I could find someone to work in it . . . I don't

have access to monies to put in a foreign language lab; they are not the mode any more, but I know that they work. Or suppose I felt that in order to help us with our writing program or our math program, I needed a consultant? Or suppose I wanted an orchestra . . . or a ballet troupe . . . or an art program, I mean a *real* art program, I don't mean scratching and finger painting, but an art program that would develop the children's insight?" Principal V saw these as the needs for bringing real educational success for his children—to get his school beyond being "mired in basic skills"—but he saw no hope in planning for them, because he saw no access to the resources necessary to implement them.

"If there's going to be shared decision-making there has to be shared responsibility. . ."

Policy Support

Principal S spoke of the need for administrative and policy as well as financial support to make school decision-making work. He told of how, after the school staff had collaboratively developed a plan, "all of sudden the district is taking away that decision-making. . . . They want your input, . . . then they go and do whatever they please."

Some of the principals' comments also made clear that many other aspects of the New York City school system will have to change for collaborative school-based decision-making to work effectively—including parent, teacher, and union attitudes: Parents and the public like to look to a single official for accountability, thus creating a continuing pressure for top-down decision-making. "The parent doesn't want to come in and talk to a committee," said Principal Y. "She's interested in meeting with the person in charge." He pointed out that the same thing is true of community demands for accountability from district superintendents. Parents' demands for district-wide or city-wide policies undercut school-based decision-making.

With regard to teachers and the union, Principal AA commented that "if teachers are going to say at three o'clock, 'Well, I have to leave', or 'I have to run now because contractually I have to go', or 'I want to take Friday off because I'm allowed 10 sick days' even though I know that it's a holiday and 15 other people are going to be out, . . . [then shared decision-making is not going to work]." Principal AA pointed out that "unless there are safeguards (and I don't see them now)—unless you either give teachers some accountability for decision-making, or retain final decision-making in the principal, you're going to weaken school administration." Principal BB pointed out that "If there's going to be shared decision-making there has to be shared responsibility. . . . [It can] have a great influence if the problems are shared equally."



School-Community Collaboration

An element of school restructuring getting increasing attention is collaboration with community resources of various kinds. This is a "restructuring" issue because, while most schools collaborate with outside agencies to some extent, serious cooperation between schools and outside organizations is often restricted by the separate bureaucratic structures and "cultures" of schools and of other agencies.

"The problems are so massive in scope that you must have a coordinated approach by the agencies which impact on the child."

The principals in this study presented some realistic negatives and positives on school-community collaboration. On the one hand, they saw that schools alone cannot meet all the needs of their students and their families—even those needs that directly relate to school success, such as health, mental health, family counseling, recreation, after-school programs, day care, housing, etc. And some schools have had good experience in work-

ing with other agencies and resources to meet some of these needs. Principal D, for example, who makes extensive use of community resources, said, "You couldn't really survive without it." On the other hand, a number of the principals said that many needed resources are not available in their communities, or that they have not had good experience in trying to work with other agencies.

Principal R reported a good relationship with a local college which provides about 200 hours of services from volunteers who "work with individual children on reading, math, games, or whatever the child needs." She had an even better program previously when there was funding for speakers and staff development activities with the college, but, regrettably, the funds for this are no longer available. She also hoped to get help from local businesses "to see if they could sponsor something like repaving my playground," because "when children see shabby, unkept, crummy looking surroundings they feel poorly about themselves, and if they feel poorly about themselves they can't achieve."

Many of the principals reported similar volunteer and collaborative projects with local libraries, hospitals, police precincts, churches, and community organizations. But a number of the principals felt that such individual projects, while valuable, were not enough to meet the vast needs they are facing.

The parents in his school are "overwhelmed," explained Principal H, and the problems they face are "massive, massive! The inability to cope with everyday life leads to deeper emotional problems and drug dependency, etc. So you're going to have to provide them some support whereby they do not turn to this kind of thing. . . . Saying 'No' to drugs, or 'Stay in school' is important, but it's sloganeering. It has to be tied in with something that shows young people why there's value in it. If they have come from a situation where it hasn't made a difference, or where they feel, 'I'm not going to get anywhere anyway,' then we're mouthing platitudes that have no real meaning." Small, collaborative projects are not enough to meet this need.

Principal H did not see the school as the proper agency to provide these massive needed comprehensive services: "To provide more services within the framework of the school is saying that we're going to try to take on something which we were not designed to do, which would in effect take away from instructional services of the children. . . . Any other services they need should be provided at a time other than when they should get their instruction."

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His answer is to have the school coordinate with other agencies that can provide the needed services. He pointed out that it is fruitless "to have a family assistant go out and find out why a child is not in school" and "not be able to coordinate the resources which, in that parent's mind," relate to why the child was kept home: "Look, my child was home taking care of the babies." Or, "I had to go out," or "I had no heat in my building," or "no hot water," and "I couldn't get my children ready for school." He made the same point about guidance: "If you have an emotional trauma, I could give you all the guidance you need, but if your problem deals with the lack of essential services, all my guidance is not going to help you."

"There needs to be a concerted effort by the various agencies to sit down and discuss a family's needs. . . . There has to be a networking . . . Each agency has its own set of regulations, and, until we start viewing the needs of the children in the total context we're not going to address the problems. "The problems are so massive in scope that you must have a coordinated approach by the agencies which impact on the child." Just having services in the school "is not addressing the larger problem." As to whether such collaboration would be pos-

sible, Principal H replied, "Look, I think that they would have to develop the mechanism," implying some significant changes in the way both schools and other agencies operate.

Principal J made a similar plea for a comprehensive coordinated plan among many resources and agencies. He sees the present fragmented approach to services as "not realistic"—not able to "do what has to be done." He reported having a number of after-school programs, sports, arts and crafts, drama, "and I take nothing away from the people who are running them: they work hard, . . . But these programs are not impact-oriented. They do not have a major consistent impact on the major problems that will make an impact. . . . These programs do not have the capacity to deliver." He has the same view of piecemeal counseling: "Just because I have a hundred kids, let's say, and all of them have been referred to top-notch organizations around the city, and they're in group counseling or individual counseling, . . . it doesn't mean in the immediate future that's going to make a big difference. I sometimes tell the kids, 'You're doing things and allowing problems to pop up quicker than anything we're doing to stop them.' When we're dealing with certain situations, the day-to-day operation in the school is so critical that it doesn't help us to know, 'Well next Thursday I'll take that up with him when I see him in group counseling.'"

Principal P saw "comprehensiveness" as going beyond just coordinating the various agencies. She saw a need for a variety of agencies working together with the school: "I'm talking about the local health agencies, the various hospitals in the area I could relate to, agencies that could come in and work with parents, that could present adult education programs, that could help parents with social services. But she also saw a need to equip parents to use agencies more comprehensively. "Very often parents don't know what is available. They need help to negotiate the system. Sometimes they don't go to anybody; they don't know they can. . . . Our parents don't know there's a community planning board they could contact and

say, 'Hey, something is not happening in this community.' They don't know the kinds of agencies that are out there and how they can use them to accomplish things."

Problems with Agency Collaboration

"I don't think there are many resources in this community to reach out to," was a comment by Principal K, echoed by several others. Principal Y, who was a strong proponent of using outside resources, reported that "there aren't that many" in his area. "There are no anti-poverty agencies," and the mental health agency is "overwhelmed—they can't follow through. If we refer a parent, and she fails to keep the appointment, they drop the case. If they could even call the school and tell us she failed to show up" it would be a help. Principal K also reported "very little feedback" from her referrals to an outside child guidance center. "I don't really know the status of the children we have referred," she complained.

"Very often parents don't know what is available. They need help to negotiate the system."

Principal M reported an excellent community mental health agency with a "wonderful" program for counseling children on the death of a parent, but she had four deaths of parents in her school in the past year, and when she called on the death of a mother, "they couldn't fit the kid in. They were overbooked."

As with so many other issues, the principals saw time as a seriously limiting factor in using outside resources—nobody has the time to make the contacts and arrangements. Principal R said that "if I had two assistant principals I could" reach out more to community resources, "but right now I'm very, very involved in the school." Principal B said, "We don't have that kind of time." She

also raised a related problem: Because there isn't the time to supervise the collaborative projects, "you don't know if it has any worth because it's all mixed up with other things."

It's an immeasurable, it's an umbrella under which you can't tell the workers from the shirkers, and I always avoid those if I can."

The rules, regulations and union constraints of the school system were also seen as limiting factors in using community resources. "They certainly can't plaster the walls that need plastering, or paint walls that need painting, or clean things that need to be cleaned, because the custodian will not let that happen," said Principal R.

Principal H reported on the problems of coordinating with the Welfare Department: "We used to fill out a form to attest that the child is attending school. So, if a child was out 30, 40, 50 days, we would put this down, figuring it had some meaning. But we found out that the Welfare Department feels obliged to give the parent the money regardless of whether the child is out a thousand days. We would want the parent to see the teacher before we're going to sign," to discuss the child's attendance, but that doesn't happen. "It's not a cooperative venture. . . . If you can get welfare simply by virtue of the fact that your child is registered in school but doesn't attend, I think it's educational neglect."

He reported the same kind of thing regarding child abuse. The school follows the new regulations about reporting possible child abuse, but "a lot of times the case workers don't go to make home visitations. Or, there's a lot of rigamarole and they say, 'Well, it's in the courts and our hands are tied', etc. . . . So you'll find the child remains in the same environment." He reported on a case of two girls repeatedly sent home for having lice, but only when a plumber found the girls running around "stark naked" and called the police were the girls put in a foster home. That's something "for which we have no power." The school "repeatedly" reported the problems as required by state law, but there's no "follow-up action. Who is to see to it that the agency does what it's supposed to be doing?" This too often is "the kind of response that you get from other agencies."

Principal U reported similar problems working with the city's Special Services for Children agency (SSC): "The problem is, if a child is breathing, SSC doesn't want to know about any sort of educational neglect. That's a really 'backburner issue' for them. If I call up and say a child has been absent 38 days, they say, 'Oh?'" Principal T had similar experience: "We might be aware of a child who is living in a home where there are rampant drugs, almost a drug den. We report this, the visit is made by SSC, and they come back and tell us nothing can be done because the child is not being abused—he's okay, nothing is wrong with the kid. . . . In far too many cases they have not been able to help. We feel often that we're aware of situations that we think are very, very serious, and they are powerless to do anything about it."

School as a Center for Services

Some of the principals see as a partial answer to this problem making the school building a center for providing many of the services needed by children and families, with the extra services mostly run by outside agencies, but closely coordinated with school services and staff.

Principal H, who was adamantly opposed to programs that "take away from the education of the children to provide services that are not instructional during the school day," nevertheless urged that the most practical place to provide the services needed for the "massive" problems facing the children and their families was "in the school building—before or after school. . . . Agencies with expertise in different areas should be able to come into the building after the school day and be available to provide for these various needs."

He sees schools as the logical place for these services because parents are familiar with them: Their child goes to the school. They know where it is. They don't have to figure out how they're going to get, for instance, to the mental health resource—or to the other places to meet their needs. They have the service all under one roof."

He saw this as part of the parents gain-

ing "a sense of ownership of a kind of 'community school' because they're familiar with the surroundings," as opposed to going to "a strange place where they feel ill at ease, and where they don't see other people who are members of their community." If the services are in the school building, there can be "networking. Neighbors come in. You can have self-help groups. That kind of thing can also spill over into the regular school day. If you have a room in the school which becomes functional for the parents, then they can expand that by bringing in people during the school day who provide various services to parents. It will get the parents in a setting where they will be able to do something positive, such as adult education to help them learn a marketable skill. You have to have something that gets parents to buy into a program of services that are going to meet their various needs. That's what you must have."

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Principal K reported a very helpful school-based health clinic staffed by a local hospital, with two full-time nurses, a nurses aide, and a doctor who comes twice a week. "All of the needs of the children can be met right in the school. . . . For example, if a teacher has noticed that a child is sleeping frequently, she might bring that to the attention of the school nurse. The nurse will contact Mommy, have Mommy sign a consent slip and give the child a physical right here in the school—and, of course, let the parent and the teacher know. Some of my children have had severe medical problems brought to our attention through the school nurse."

Principal T saw the same logic for dealing with psychological problems. The outside

"institutions are overburdened themselves. They have a tremendous case load. You send the child, but will the parent follow through and take the child? If I had my way I would have guidance counselors right here to deal with the less severe problems and with preventive counseling. Why not have it here? We have the child in school, the facility is here, and the child is in a familiar surrounding. Why not deal with the child right here?" Principal N made a similar point: "We refer parents out to agencies, but they don't go. We need the agencies in the school." One principal estimated that only about 40% of parents referred to outside agencies ever get to them.

Principal U reported in 1988 a very helpful relationship with a community agency that sends social workers to the school. "These are the kind of social workers who are really social workers. If the mother doesn't keep her appointment, the social worker gets up off her chair, looks up the address, and goes and finds the mother. She doesn't just say, 'Well, we must close this case because nobody showed up.' Also, they deal with the situation at hand. They don't come to me and say, 'You must completely individualize this student's life; he must move to his uncle in California.' That's what I hear from other agencies. This is an agency where they really grapple with the problems at hand, and they make amazing changes in children's lives. It's just phenomenal." Unfortunately, in 1990 she reported the two good social workers had left the agency and therefore the school.

**"... for all the faults we
may have as schools, we are
the closest to the family ..."**

Principal Y also saw the advantage of having the school be the locus for services to families. "I don't think we realize the severity and depth of the problems that many of these families face, and for all the faults we may have as schools, we are the closest to the

family. ... The parents can get an answer and deal with a person in 'authority' more easily than in almost any other city agency they come in contact with."

Principal K saw a similar advantage to school-based services: "I think parents would trust school staff more than outside agencies." As soon as we mention an outside guidance center, "right away the mother

**"We refer parents out to
agencies, but they don't go.
We need the agencies
in the school."**

says, 'Well, I don't want my child going to a psychiatric place.' There seems to be a stigma attached to it." Principal Z agreed: "It's a difficult thing for a parent to say, 'My child needs mental health guidance,' because right away you're saying, 'There's something wrong with me.' It would be better therefore to have the services in the school. She felt the same about health, dental and even housing services—all run by outside agencies, but in the school building, since the parents come to the school for these problems anyway. Principal C, who reported no lack of resources in the community, said "the issue is getting parents to take the children to the resource." She said many of her parents view therapy as "a middle class thing" and are reluctant to use it. The whole "process has to be facilitated" by making "psychiatric or psychological services available within the school building so that the whole process is so simplified that it means that all the child has to do is get himself into school and these services are offered."

Principal Y raised the point that in some cases there's "a certain advantage to going outside. Privacy is one thing we really don't have," and it's sometimes better if "a parent can go out and deal with the problem away from being seen by other parents 'going in to talk to the shrink' so to speak." And other principals admitted that some parents don't trust the schools enough to bring their prob-

lems there. But most principals who addressed this problem saw providing services at the school site as a practical way to develop the kind of comprehensive, collaborative approach needed in their severely deprived communities.

◆◆◆ Smaller Schools, Open Longer

In addition to collaboration with outside agencies, with the school possibly as the site for many of the services, some of the principals spoke of a related need: for smaller schools and longer school hours.

If school restructuring is to result in a higher level of collaboration between principal, teachers, pupils, parents, and community agencies, then the size of a school and the hours it is open for use are indeed relevant.

"Before I die, I want to be principal of a small school," said Principal G. "I want to see what it's like." Principal F thinks she knows: "Elementary schools should have a cap of 500 children. That's enough for any one person to get a grip on. Smaller schools have many less problems. . . because of the human factor of youngsters." Principal H reported that he can manage his school of almost 1000, and its size permits more diverse programs, but he still thinks a smaller size is preferable.

Principal W, with over 1500 students, says she has come to the conclusion that her school's biggest problem is size: Although the community thinks well of the school and it has many good programs, she thinks it would do still better if it were broken up into three mini-schools.

**"It's a difficult thing
for a parent to say.
'My child needs mental
health guidance,' . . ."**

Some principals pointed out that schools need to be open longer—in the morning ("so, if nothing else, kids can come in from the cold"), after school for enrichment and remediation, and into the evening to serve parents and the community. Principal P proposed an evening program with computer, language, and home-skills workshops for parents and children together. "It would be a very helpful program," she said. Other suggestions were for opening schools on Saturday and even for 12 months. Such extended hours for schools would, of course, be necessary for the kind of "community school" advocated by some of the principals and now being sponsored in a few places by the New York State Board of Regents.



Researchers' Analysis and Policy Options:

*An Agenda for
Restructuring Schools*

An Agenda for Restructuring Schools

The insights the principals have given us in this study—of bureaucratic impediments to their efforts to educate children and a system nowhere near its potential—provide a powerful argument for restructuring New York City public schools, a process that the system's new Chancellor, Joseph A. Fernandez, has announced as one of his highest priorities.

But what does "restructuring" mean? As a *New York Times* review of the restructuring movement pointed out, "Everyone who uses it seems to have something different in mind." [1] Some people are talking about "restructuring" the school schedule, some of the curriculum, some the methods of teaching, some the governance structure.

Chancellor Fernandez' program for restructuring calls for "School-Based Management and or/Shared Decision-Making" (SBM/SDM). These or similar terms are being used increasingly in other school systems and in the literature on school restructuring. But it is imperative to understand that the *purpose* of school restructuring is not to create school-based management or shared decision-making. Rather, it is the other way around: The purpose of the school-based management and shared decision-making is to restructure the relationships among the key players—teachers, students, administrators, parents, other school staff, and community resources and agencies—so as to better help children to become successful learners.

The whole process—if conducted properly—can create an educational community whose participants have a vested interest in working together to greatly increase the educational success of its children. If the process does not do this, its purpose is lost.

But why do the *relationships* of people in the school community have to be changed to

produce this kind of collaboration and motivation? And what does this have to do with the *structure* of the system?



Basic Structure Flawed

The basic structure of relationships in public school systems is usually taken for granted. It has been established and remained unchallenged for so long that people tend not to see it as a source of problems or a possible area of change. But as new national and world conditions make unprecedented demands upon our educational system, policy analysts have increasingly come to see this structure as seriously flawed.

The basic problem is that the structure of human relationships in public school systems is not based on a collaborative model in which people work together with a sense of shared mission, but is based instead on a *delegation and bureaucratic model*: Parents and the community delegate the responsibility for educating children to a government agency, which in turn delegates it down through the "chain of command" of a bureaucratic organization to teachers, who are then supposed to "deliver instructional services" to the children. The functional goal (that for which teachers are supposedly held accountable) is the "delivery of instructional services," not the successful education of children. Even this goal need not be "shared": Staff is hired to carry out the system's definition of "instructional services" whether they share it or not. They are given separate, specialized functions defined by the bureaucratic organization and are not expected to work together either with each other or with students, parents, and community agencies. The students, parents, and citizens have no active educational responsibilities in this model; they are the passive recipients of the services "delivered."

To govern such a system, myriad rules, regulations, guidelines, directives, and reporting requirements are promulgated by various offices and bureaus. These are accompanied by union agreements, laws, court decisions, and the decisions of elected or appointed school boards (in New York City, 32 local school boards, as well as a city school board, and a state board of regents). Each level must operate within all the constraints and meet all the demands of the levels above it.

The tragic result is that, in spite of pronouncements and honest intentions, the main focus of the system is not on creating and maintaining the most productive possible relationship between students and teachers, which is at the heart of its reason for being, but on adhering to the rules, regulations and agreements. To a critical extent decisions are not based upon what would best foster students' learning, but upon the standard operating procedures of the system.

Many teachers, principals, parents and students deviate from this "structure" in a variety of ways—thank heavens! They are to one degree or another what Denis Doyle calls the "canny outlaws" who have enabled public schools to be effective in many cases.^[2] But the basic delegation/bureaucratic structure of relationships imposes a powerful influence on the behavior and mind-set of most participants in public schooling—particularly in large systems, and particularly where social and economic conditions hinder the kind of informal relationships outside the formal structure that can generate a collaborative and mutually supportive spirit.

There is a growing awareness that reliance on such a bureaucratic command-control structure is not the most effective way to achieve quality in many kinds of institu-

tions. Industry after industry is beginning to restructure according to this new perception, with the emphasis on building teams of workers who collaborate to accomplish their goals and demand quality of themselves and each other. It should be clear that the traditional non-collaborative structure is, if anything, even less suitable for schools than for factories.



The Proposed Restructuring

When this different perception becomes internalized in the educational system, each school will be a team of administrators and teachers studying and working together, in collaboration with parents, community agencies, and the students themselves, to find ways to stimulate, nurture, and support the learning of its students. The levels of the system "above" the school will still have the responsibility to monitor what takes place in the school and to intervene when necessary, but their primary function will be to do whatever is possible to facilitate the work and productive relationships of the people at the school level.

Under the restructured system, instead of the schools always listening "upward" for directions from the bureaus and offices "above" them, the entire system will be listening "downward" to what is being learned at the "production point" where teachers and students are engaged in the teaching-learning process and where principals are trying to provide leadership in the creation of a collaborative learning environment. Instead of "delivering instructional services" to passive students, the object will be to stimulate and nurture the natural human capacity (yes, even need) for inquiry, for exploration, for wonder, for knowledge, for socialization and for accomplishment.

Knowledge of all kinds, of course, must be

transmitted, but the process by which students learn this knowledge in school is the interaction between student and teacher, not delivery of a commodity called "learning" into empty heads. Increased learning, indeed, is the primary reason for—and must be the primary focus of—restructuring.

When the problems that restructuring must address are seen in the above terms, it becomes apparent that simply changing the governance of the system is not enough. The New York City Decentralization Law of 1969 is an example of this. Whatever the merits of this type of decentralized governance, one fact seems irrefutable: the city is still failing to educate a frighteningly large number of its children. The above analysis suggests that a major reason for its failure to substantially raise learning levels is that neither the decentralization law itself, nor the Board of Education and the bureaucracy that was supposed to implement it, had any program or policy for changing the functioning of the participants or the relationships among them beyond district governance. The new community school districts were still bureaucratic "service delivery" systems (very large by national standards, with usually between 15,000 and 30,000 students) and carried on much as before—except that now there were two layers of overlapping bureaucracies (central and local) in the already failing top-down, chain of command system.



Increasing Demands for Restructuring

As a result of disappointment with past reform efforts not only in New York, but all over the country, an increasing number of commissions and individual educational thinkers who have analyzed the problems of public schooling have begun to move beyond isolated reforms, or even governance

reforms, to the idea that school systems must be fundamentally "restructured" if there is any hope of achieving the levels of education now required by American society.

The Carnegie Task Force's *A Nation Prepared* concluded in 1986 that "We do not believe the educational system needs repairing; we believe it must be rebuilt . . . what needs to be done cannot be done within the constraints imposed by the system of public education that has been in place for many decades." [3] Many reports since *A Nation Prepared* have agreed. Their views can be summed up in the 1990 Massachusetts Institute of Technology report on *Education That Works*: "The most important part of any plan to improve education for everybody . . . must be to radically restructure America's schools." [4]

Voices from as different perspectives as Albert Shanker, head of the American Federation of Teachers, and David Kearns, head of the Xerox corporation, have reached the same conclusion: "Our persistent educational crisis," says Shanker, "shows that we've reached the limits of our traditional model of education. . . . The rigid and confining structure that the traditional model of education imposes on teachers and students doesn't enable even the majority of children to be educated—and it never did." [5]

Kearns says that, "giant school districts are organized like a dinosaur whose head is barely able to communicate with its tail." They have "archaic, outmoded, and thoroughly discredited practices" which "stifle creativity and independent judgment" just when "both creativity and independent judgment are critical, particularly on the part of building principals and teachers." [6]

Kearns is not a businessman who looks at public schools and says, "Why don't you do

the great kind of job business has been doing?" As he sees it, both American business and public schools have been "committed to ossified management structures. The modern company has decentralized of necessity—the old command-control structure no longer works." [7] He says that both schools and American business need to be radically restructured if they want to meet the demands of today's society.



Restructuring Will Be Difficult

Basic restructuring, however, is extremely difficult—in business or in education. Kearns reported that at Xerox, it was "a massive undertaking." "Our entire way of thinking needed to be replaced. Not just updated or revamped—replaced." It required a process that "radically changed people's attitudes about the organization and their role in it." He adds that, "Restructuring schools will be no less difficult." [8] In our view it is likely to be *more* difficult, since public schools are not governed by a single executive group that can plan and implement a comprehensive restructuring strategy. They are governed by a multiplicity of superintendents, boards, legislatures and commissioners, at various levels of government, not to mention the courts, with a multiplicity of interest groups pulling them in many directions. Few if any of the "restructuring" experiments in public schools are being conducted in contexts where all of these influences are united in the restructuring effort.

Further complicating the problem is the *interdependence* of the various changes that have to be made. There is little chance that "school-based management" will work so long as accountability at district, city and state levels is conceived and implemented in the present top-down, "command-control"

model. Likewise, there is little chance that "shared decision-making" will work within the schools so long as principals' accountability is defined primarily in terms of a hierarchical chain of command—little chance that teachers will be willing or able to play their new roles unless they and their schools are given true responsibility—little chance that sufficient new collaborative relationships will develop either within schools or between schools, parents and community agencies without redefinitions of the roles of schools, families and communities—and little chance that any of this will happen to any significant extent without all the participants developing new skills, understanding and attitudes. Much of the principals' skepticism about various aspects of "restructuring" comes from their realistic assessment of the limited value—if not downright danger—of implementing one component of restructuring while the rest of the system remains "unrestructured."

The *Principals Speak* study therefore confirms the conclusion reached by the Carnegie Task force in *A Nation Prepared*: It is a *comprehensive* restructuring that is now needed. Piecemeal reform will not work. It "would inevitably defeat the purpose, because the result would be to leave in place the forces that make the current system work the way it does. It is the entire structure that needs an overhaul, not just a few components." The Task Force insisted that its recommendations were not just "a list of independent strategies. They constitute a whole. None will succeed unless all are implemented." [9]

Similar conclusions have been reached by those school reform projects that have set high educational goals and confronted the impossibility of reaching them without fundamental restructuring, such as the Coalition for Essential Schools, initiated by Ted

Sizer, of which Deborah Meier's Central Park East Secondary School in New York City is a part, and the Accelerated Schools, initiated by Prof. Henry Levin of Stanford University, with their goal of enabling *all* children, including poor and minority children, to handle sixth grade level work by the sixth grade.

In addition to the problems of complexity involved in restructuring, another lesson that grows out of this realization of the interdependence of the needed changes is what may seem like a contradiction: "Restructuring is comprised of many simultaneous innovations." [10] As one study put it, it "requires juggling many changes at once." [11] Yet, obviously it will take *time* to bring these changes about. The escape from this seeming contradiction comes from realizing that "simultaneously" does not mean "instantaneously." What is needed is a broad-gauged strategy for changing a number of interrelated elements over a period of years. This will take a vision—at least in outline—of the new set of relationships to be built, as well as much patience, strategy, tactics, negotiation, retraining, and educating to help people adjust to the new relationships which must be formed.

Despite the tremendous challenge all this presents to participants in New York City education, the picture presented by the principals in this study makes clear that it is a challenge that must be faced. Something fundamental about the existing system is not working—too many children are not learning, too many teachers are inexperienced, unqualified, demoralized, or unmotivated, too many parents are uninvolved and unsupportive, too many students are disengaged and alienated, too much money is wasted, and, yes, too many principals are not strong leaders.

Only fundamental change can respond to such fundamental problems. Yet the principals' testimony convinces us that such fundamental change is possible. Indeed, in trying to carry out their own missions in their individual schools, many of them have already undertaken some elements of the needed restructuring. Some of them indicated that, despite the suffocating bureaucracy, they try to get away with as much decision-making at the school level as they can, sometimes with the encouragement of their district superintendents and sometimes in spite of them.

Many of them practice "shared decision-making"—with some teachers. Some of them reported considerable progress with collaborative planning through the Comprehensive School Improvement Program (CSIP), the Urban Coalition's earlier Local School Development program, or a plan of their own devising. One of the principals, with the encouragement and support of the district superintendent, has been engaged in a carefully designed plan in which representatives of teachers, parents, and the community join with the principal in defining various school policies—sometimes after study and recommendations by sub-committees. Some of the decisions that are required of the principals are also discussed before they must be made. Most of the principals try to reach out to parents more than many schools do. Some of them have had success in working collaboratively with outside agencies and resources.

The problem is that too much of this has indeed been "piecemeal." It can't really flourish because the structure of the system above and outside the individual schools remains unchanged, and even within the schools there has not been sufficient clarity and agreement about the restructuring of relationships needed nor the resources

available for bringing it about.

The principals were fully aware that basic change is difficult. As Principal W said: "The process of change certainly causes people discomfort." But she added, "the ultimate good is that we do something about a system that is failing our kids".



Policy and Action Options

To make "restructuring" work in New York City we suggest the following policy and action options: (1) A collaboration of school and non-school forces to foster a unified approach to restructuring, (2) Special effort to include principals in the coalition, (3) Focus on success for all children, (4) Focus on changing teaching-learning practices, (5) Widespread discussion of restructuring, (6) A special fund for the "conversion costs" of restructuring, (7) A new parent involvement policy, (8) Collaboration with community resources, (9) Provision of time for restructuring activities, (10) smaller schools, (11) the linkage of "governance" to restructuring, and (12) the provision of adequate basic budget resources to the system as a whole.

1 City-wide Collaboration for Restructuring

From the statements of the experienced and committed principals in our study we see the potential for fruitful cooperation among the various educational constituencies, despite their different interests, in restructuring New York City schools into collaborative, success-oriented learning communities. At the same time we see the potential for much destructive power struggle and dissipation of energies if there isn't more unity than at present about goals, objectives, and procedures of such restructuring.

One way to promote more unity about restructuring is to *organize* those who agree to the basic outlines of restructuring into a "collaboration" that will work together to bring it about. As one study of school restructuring pointed out, "Dramatic changes in schools necessitate broad constituent support," and the type of change called for in restructuring requires "mobilizing different stake-holders to collaborate on achieving a common vision." [12] Another study pointed out that "some restructuring proponents are not even talking with each other," and warned that "without serious discussion across the different reform camps, restructuring will remain a disjointed enterprise"—indeed will likely join many other educational reforms in "the proverbial graveyard of educational fads." [13]

There need not be unity about all the details of a new model of public education for restructuring to succeed. On the contrary, much experimentation and trial and error is inevitable, and even desirable, in working out something so complex. It is to be expected that people and groups will have different views and interests to be ironed out. But there must be unity about a central vision and broad outline of action that can enlist wide support and build momentum to overcome the natural resistance to change.

Two Basic Concepts of Restructuring: In our view, there are two basic propositions on which there must be widespread agreement for the necessary restructuring to succeed in a city like New York: (1) the need for shifting from an acceptance of a high level of mediocrity and failure to a goal of "success for all" and (2) the need, in order to achieve this goal, for shifting from a command-control, hierarchical management and accountability model to a collaborative model in which all the players, including teachers, administrators, parents, students and community

agencies, work together to produce the desired "success for all children."

The fact that these two propositions will seem utterly simple and obvious to some people, and impossibly visionary to others is a sign of why there is need for "a whole new way of looking at education." [14] Hence the need for bringing together as wide a range of groups as possible to develop a common understanding of and support for this "new way of thinking."

These groups should include parents, educators, and community leaders and organizations that can plan and support a change strategy over a period of years.

The Potential for Unity: We believe there is more potential for workable agreement by education and civic groups than ever before. Forces which have been at odds in the past are much closer in their thinking about what needs to be done, as can be seen by the degree of consensus reached by representatives of many of these groups on a number of recent task forces such as The New York State Education Commissioner's Task Force on the Teaching Profession (1988), the Manhattan Borough President's Task Force on Education (1987-1989, appointed by Mayor Dinkens when he was Manhattan Borough President), and the New York State Task Force on Implementing Educational Reform (1989).

Recent field research on restructuring education as a success-oriented, collaborative effort at the school and community level also lends support to this new model as a viable basis for unifying around a common agenda with strong leadership, work, and resources many constituencies can be brought together to collaborate in supporting the kind of restructuring now needed.

2 Special Effort to Include Principals in the Collaboration

School principals and administrators represent a special concern in regard to developing unity about school "restructuring." In our view, the principals are absolutely essential to successful implementation of restructuring. Certainly, the leadership and human relations skills of the individual building principal are essential to developing a collaborative, success-oriented school. But we believe that the leadership of the principals as a professional group is also important, since they help set a tone and can interpret to others the need for, and nature of, the restructuring now called for. They are the natural, and indeed official, leaders of the schools, and if they are not helping to lead the restructuring effort, then the total effort will be weakened.

Many people assume that the principals will oppose the proposed restructuring because they will see it as a threat to their power. In fact, principals associations in Rochester, Chicago and elsewhere, have brought law suits or otherwise tried to block certain elements of restructuring plans. Our interviews with principals in this study, however, convince us that opposition to restructuring is not necessary or inevitable. Indeed the principals we interviewed favored a collaborative model, and some are engaged in putting one into place. We think they would welcome further developments in this direction if properly implemented. What most of them fear, and we think it is an understandable fear that must be taken into account in defining and planning "restructuring," is having their authority taken away (or further eroded, since they have only limited unilateral authority even now), while they are still held accountable unilaterally for the successful operation of their schools as defined by authorities "above" them. They also fear having decision-making bogged

down in too much "process" and fear having their leadership eroded at a time when they see a stronger-than-ever need for leadership to fulfill their professional commitment to successful schools.

We believe that part of the resolution of this problem can come from a proper definition of restructuring. Too often "shared decision-making" is perceived as "power-sharing"—i.e. the redistribution of a limited amount of power or authority—rather than as a process whereby teachers and principals (and parents, students, and community representatives—or whoever else is participating) combine their knowledge, understanding and commitment in the interest of creating a successful educational program. If conceived in this way, shared decision-making can empower all the participants, giving all of them the "sense of ownership" needed for collaboration and success.

The narrower and destructive "power-sharing"—or "zero-sum" concept, in which any gain in power by a "subordinate" is viewed as a subtraction of power from his "boss"—is a product of the existing hierarchical management model, and is a good example of why restructuring requires "a whole new way of looking at education," as urged by the New York State Task Force on Implementing Educational Reform, and a new "entire way of thinking" about managing productive human enterprises, as suggested by David Kearns from his experience in restructuring Xerox. [15]

A collaborative model of schooling adds an additional accountability system, in which teachers, students, parents and administrators hold themselves and each other accountable personally and directly, because they are all part of a team committed to achieving the shared goal of the successful education of all children. This kind of highly productive accountability is different from

that produced through "monitoring" by distant officials who are "accountable" to an impersonal bureaucracy, which in turn is "accountable" to the electorate through boards of education and various political officials. This latter, formal accountability system is still needed, but only as a back-up, when collaborative school-level accountability fails.

New Role for Principal: The collaborative model in no way weakens the role of the principal. If anything, it enhances the need for leadership at the school level. But it redefines the leadership role, as spelled out in more detail in the section on Leadership. The principal becomes accountable not just for transmitting and enforcing orders from above (a "middle-manager" in the old model), or dictating his or her own vision of a school through bureaucratic "authority," but for leading a school in creating a sense of common purpose and for creating a collegial spirit among staff and partnership with students, parents, and community. Indeed, principals become accountable for encouraging and facilitating leadership from all participants—for becoming a leader of leaders, not just a leader of passive followers. Many principals in New York City are already practicing these needed leadership skills, and we believe that most of those who aren't would be willing to learn them. For dealing with those who won't or can't, we have proposals in the following section on Leadership.

The interviews with the principals in this study give us confidence that this important constituency can not only cooperate in a productive restructuring of the schools, but can play an important leadership role in planning and implementing the restructuring needed, and every effort should be made to encourage and facilitate their playing such a leadership role.

3 Focus on "Success For All Children"

Experience with collaborative school-based planning and management both in New York City and elsewhere teaches us that there is considerable danger that such efforts will lose sight of their goals, with the process becoming more important than children's learning and achievement. Time and care have to be taken at all levels—in individual school planning councils as well as in a city-wide collaboration—to ensure that there is common agreement on goals that are *important, challenging, and measurable in productive ways*.

We recommend one overall goal which we think meets these requirements: "success for *all* children." While this goal may at first seem either impractical or unreasonable, given the overwhelming problems confronting many urban children, we think it can have a powerful motivating force if taken seriously as a part of a collaborative model. For this goal to work in a situation like New York's it is not necessary for there to be agreement on every detail of learning standards. It is only necessary to recognize that there are currently tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of students in our public schools who are not achieving success by any reasonable standard. The goal becomes one of trying to eliminate or reduce this number to an absolute minimum.

Such a goal cannot function effectively in the "command-control," bureaucratic model of education because it is too easy for each participant to blame someone else for a student's failure—the teacher can blame the parents or the student himself, the parents can blame the teacher, everyone can blame "the system," etc. Each player can say he or she is doing the task assigned to him by the "system," and it's the other fellow who is

falling down on his job. In a collaborative model, there is much less tendency for mutual blame-placing; the object is for everyone to work together to assure the student's success, including the student himself.

A goal of success for all children is an *important* goal because it is from among those children who are failing, or whom the system is failing, that will come the bulk of the unemployed, alienated, drug addicted and criminal. It is a *challenging* goal, since we are so far from achieving it. And it is a goal which is *measurable in a productive way* (not with exactness, but with enough clarity to spur action) by simply seeing how many children are still falling short of any reasonable level of success academically and socially.

Accelerated Schools Model: One way to make the "success for all children" goal more concrete and measurable is to set a particular objective to be achieved at a specific time, as has been done for the Accelerated Schools developed by Prof. Henry Levin of Stanford University.[16] The objective for an elementary school might be stated as attempting "to get all children able to function at the sixth grade level by the sixth grade," or by whatever grade next follows "graduation" from the school. This type of goal would require a more careful definition of what "able to function at the 6th grade level" means, but it would give an opportunity to get away from just using standardized test scores, since the purpose is to make sure that the student has a good chance of success at his or her next level of schooling, and factors such as self-confidence, good work habits, and behavior would have to be taken into account in judging attainment of the goal. Furthermore it provides a rich agenda of action and change for all the parties, includ-

ing the students themselves, to work on together in trying to achieve the goal.

Some might think that setting specific measurable achievement levels for all to reach makes such a goal even more impractical in a urban setting, since it means in effect that "disadvantaged" children are expected to learn more in six or seven years of schooling than children who start school with more school-related skills. But this misses the purpose of such a goal. Many of the most productive corporations set these types of goals for "no rejects" or "100% perfect service," not with the expectation that, as a statistical matter, they will always be achieved, but because they create a whole different sense of purpose and morale among those who are trying to achieve them, and also help all participants probe the full extent of additional efforts and resources needed.

A further advantage of agreement on important, challenging and measurable goals such as these is that they can help all of the participants overcome the entirely natural resistances to change in long-standing behavior, habits and attitudes, and can help resolve some of the tensions and differences among different participants and constituencies. All sorts of people who have not worked together cooperatively before will come together to collaborate and take on new duties and roles in fighting a war against a common enemy: the new goal is more important than their differences or old behavior. The goal of educating all our children successfully could take on this kind of over-arching importance.

4 Focus on Changing Teaching-Learning Practices

In addition to setting challenging goals and monitoring their achievement, special

efforts have to be made to keep the main focus of collaborative school-based planning and management on changing what goes on in the classroom. While many useful and important things can be added to the basic instructional program, such as after-school tutoring and enrichment, parent involvement and support, extracurricular clubs, collaboration with community health, recreation, and family support resources, etc., there is a tendency sometimes to focus on these additions to the exclusion of finding ways to increase the productivity of regular classroom teaching and learning. Yet, there is little chance of achieving the challenging educational goals now required without changing what happens in the classroom, where most of the resources of the school in time and money are concentrated.

In the "Accelerated Schools" mentioned above, once the staff had spent the time to discuss and adopt the ambitious goal of getting all their children to sixth grade level by sixth grade, most of their planning and implementing attention was directed to changing their classroom teaching-learning practices to achieve this goal.

The spirit of school based management is not to dictate to schools how to improve their instructional program, but to ensure that such improvement is a major focus of the school-based planning and decision-making process. We suggest four main approaches to this problem: Guidelines, Staff development, Technical assistance, and Monitoring.

Guidelines for school-based management should require that school-based plans include a major section on improving teaching-learning strategies. Each school's plan should be designed to meet the particular needs of that school; experimentation should be encouraged, so long as the school

includes evaluation procedures in its plan; but the existence of a viable plan should be required for participation in school base-management.

Staff development requires much more opportunity than now exists for school-level staff (actually for all participants in school level planning, including administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, and students where they are involved) to learn about various instructional and organizational techniques, such as cooperative learning, literature-based programs, reading through writing, team teaching, etc. Visits to schools using these methods, reading and discussion about them, and in-classroom coaching, are all aspects of staff development that will be needed to help schools develop and implement new teaching and learning strategies.

Technical assistance is usually needed for any serious change process, since change involves not just new ideas, but new attitudes, the overcoming of old habits, changed relationships, etc. Research has demonstrated that school scheduling, curriculum, and teaching practices are inherently conservative activities—very resistant to change—and schools usually need help in facilitating such change. Such technical assistance could come from the district, central board, universities or outside agencies.

Monitoring requires review by the district and central levels to make sure that each school has a plan for improving and evaluating classroom teaching and learning, that it is being implemented, and that it is producing the results expected. If after a reasonable time, if it does not produce results, the school should be required to change its plan based on its analysis of its short-comings. District, central, or outside technical assistance can help with this process. Teachers, parents, or citizens should be able to appeal to the moni-

toring unit if they think a plan is inadequate, not being implemented, or failing to achieve its goals.

5 Widespread Discussion of Restructuring

To create the necessary understanding of and agreement about "restructuring," people must discuss it. If, as the New York State Task Force on Implementing Educational Reform (1989) and analysts such as David Kearns and others have concluded, restructuring of the type needed calls for "a whole new way of looking at education," [17] then ways must be found for people to orient themselves to the "new way of looking"—to see and feel what a collaborative model of public schooling would be like and understand how different is it from our present bureaucratic "command-control" model—to see and feel the "possible reality" of a system really committed to the success of all children instead of one that accepts, however regretfully, winners and losers—with poor and minority children mostly the losers.

This means, among other things, meetings—many of them—but meetings of a different order from the typical meetings in most city school systems, which usually either focus on planning or implementing programs within the existing model, or provide a forum for people to complain about the present system and to vent their frustrations, at the way in which the system too often treats everyone involved—students, parents, teachers, administrators, community representatives and taxpayers.

The meetings now needed must be for the purpose of developing a *sense of unity* about changing the model of public education—to increase understanding about (1) *why* it needs to be changed, (2) *what* basic changes

in relationships and goals are needed, and (3) *how* these changes will be brought about.

The President of The United States and the governors of the states met in an historic "summit" meeting in the fall of 1989—the only such meeting ever called on education and only the third meeting of president with the governors in U.S. history—to discuss, among other things, something like the two propositions proposed above: the need "to ensure that every child can acquire the knowledge and skills required," and the need "to undertake a major state-by-state effort to restructure our educational system" and "to dramatically alter our system of education to achieve this goal." [18] The State of California called a statewide meeting in December, 1989 to discuss some of the same issues. Could New York City, whose school system is bigger than that of most states, call its own "education summit" to see if unity can be developed around the basic elements of a new model for public education?

A "summit" for New York City education, therefore, might have to be organized as a series of meetings in which the possibility of unity is explored and the terms of such unity are tested out with various groups meeting together in various combinations. But the goal of such meetings would be clear: Not whether there are many things wrong with the way things are now operating—which we already know—but whether there might be a *new way of operating*, based on a "new way of looking at education," on which we can get enough agreement to move forward in trying to create it.

6 A Special Fund to Support Restructuring

No successful business would undertake such a fundamental restructuring as is now

contemplated for public education without investing adequate resources for the "conversion costs" of retraining, reorienting, planning, and technical assistance. Indeed, studies of school restructuring have confirmed that the same need applies to school restructuring: "the need to make certain that ... sufficient investment is made in building decision-making capacity at the school-level," and the need for "training and other start-up costs." [19]

But where will the necessary funds come from—especially in a period of fiscal constraint when it's hard to find funds even for basic and desperately needed services for children?

We believe it is imperative for the extra costs of conversion to be seen as an extraordinary expense extending over several years that should not be treated as a normal part of the annual operating budget. Indeed, if it is legally possible, we think it would be justifiable to pay some of these conversion costs through the city's capital budget or from a special appropriation from surpluses of the Municipal Assistance Corporation, on the grounds that the expense is an investment in converting to a new structure that will be more productive than the present one and will therefore pay for itself over time. To the extent this is legally impossible, the necessary funds should be appropriated with the same concept in mind—that this is an investment and not an expense—an investment in making all other expenditures more productive.

Foundations and corporations can be expected to contribute some of these extra conversion costs for such things as special training, orientation and technical assistance. (The Aaron Diamond Foundation, for instance, has allocated \$1 million to help schools with restructuring expenses.) But it would

be a mistake to rely too much on private funding, since experience has shown that school systems are less likely to treat change seriously if too much is done with outside money. If sufficient funding is not made available restructuring may have to proceed more slowly. But some progress can be made. Schools may have to be called upon to be more inventive (as the teachers and principals of some of the schools in this study have demonstrated as possible) and the school system will have to be called upon to be more flexible in allowing them to be more inventive so that staff can be freed up to engage in planning and reorienting activities. (New flexibility in the use of Chapter 1 funds, for instance, provides opportunities to use available categorical funds for restructuring efforts.) Finally, the cutback in centralized functions, staffing and expenses, might be speeded up to provide more of a "debureaucratization dividend" to help pay for the conversion costs of restructuring.

The one thing that must not be done is to proceed with this exceedingly important but difficult reform without providing the needed assistance to the schools going through the process. This would only be a prescription for yet another failure that would further discredit not only school reform but the whole cause of public education at a time when it can ill afford it.

7 A New Parent Involvement Policy

There is increasing recognition among educators of the importance of parent involvement, but as the principals in this study point out, there are many difficulties as well as advantages in involving parents in urban school systems. (Another report of *Principals Speak* will provide a fuller report of the principals' views on parent involvement.) Many

schools in New York City have indeed been developing new policies and techniques for reaching out to working, single, non-English-speaking, and other parents (and alternative caretakers) who have usually not been involved in their children's schooling, and the Chancellor has indicated his intention to continue to develop support for these efforts.

We believe that these new initiatives must be escalated substantially to make parent involvement an integral part of the restructuring process. Each school-based restructuring effort should be required to have a specific plan for parent involvement, including strategies and function to ensure that parents get the information and assistance they need for effective participation. The Board of Education's central coordinating unit for parent involvement should be closely linked with the other units working on restructuring. Individual schools, school districts, the board of education, and various parent and community organizations all share responsibilities for mounting a massive effort to help parents understand their new roles and responsibilities in a collaborative, success-oriented education system, and to help them fulfill these roles.

8 Collaboration with Community Resources

Educational leaders also increasingly agree with the comment of the principals that, as the New York State Task Force on Implementing Educational Reform put it, "schools can't do it alone." [20] Nor can schools and families working together always meet all the needs that interfere with children's learning. The Task Force on Implementation endorsed the State Task Force on Children and Youth in calling on the human service community to "speak with a single voice" and to intensify its efforts to coordinate its services

on behalf of children. [21]

Such coordination however, has been proposed for a long time without producing substantial change, which leads us to believe that such changed behavior in many different agencies will require some restructuring within them as well as within the schools. We recommend a consortium under the Mayor, Chancellor, and private agencies to mobilize and coordinate the various services in new ways. As with parent involvement, we urge that this be seen as an integral aspect of educational restructuring. A new shared mission of ensuring the successful education of all children could also help to overcome old habits and relationships that have stood in the way of effective collaboration. Community agencies that have had difficulty in working with schools in the past have to see that the schools are reaching out in a new way—not just for “good community relations,” but from a conviction that collaboration with community agencies is an integral part of their educational mission to ensure the success of every child.

Programs such as the Community Schools Project, sponsored by the New York State Board of Regents, with schools open in the afternoon and evening for student tutoring and enrichment, parent involvement and community agency programs, should be significantly expanded.

9 Adequate Time and Technical Assistance for Restructuring

Although implicit in our proposal for a special fund for restructuring (#6 above), we wish to draw special attention to the need for providing teachers, administrators, other school staff, and parents and community representatives with sufficient time for planning, communicating, and developing a sense

of common purpose, both as to goals and means for achieving them. The principals in this study placed heavy emphasis on the need for planning time. For an organization to change its basic structure of relationships is notoriously difficult because the existing model gets built into people's thinking—it has to for people to be able to function in the existing model. The new behaviors cannot just be mandated; participants need to internalize the new model and satisfy themselves that it is in their interest to adopt it as their own.

Schools will differ in their capacity to provide part of the necessary time but almost certainly some extra resources will have to be allotted to solving this problem.

In addition to time, another crucial factor required in successful change is technical assistance to facilitate the change process. The experience of groups such as the National Committee for Citizens in Education, the Institute for Responsive Education, and the Urban Coalition which have worked with schools and school systems on collaborative school-based planning and management has demonstrated that technical assistance is not only useful but essential. And it is available from many sources.

10 Smaller, Less Crowded Schools

All of the advice provided by the principals in this study as to the need for developing a sense of teamwork, commitment to individual children, and a feeling of “family” is harder to implement in large schools and in overcrowded schools—especially in chaotic inner-city situations. Small size by itself does not guarantee success, but large size makes achieving success much more difficult.

It is obvious to any observer of schools that, whatever the size of a school, overcrowding creates havoc with the kind of relationships needed in an environment conducive to learning. It clearly eliminates such basic "tools" as an adequate library, recreation space, parents center, adequate space for support staff, science laboratory, a computer room. These tools are expected—and usually gained—in schools of the middle class. Indeed, some of the most egregious denials of equal opportunity can be seen in many of our inner city schools.

The restructuring agenda for the city, therefore, must include a policy of limiting the size of new schools and helping larger old schools either to develop mini-schools within the same building or to find some other way to facilitate the kind of personal relationships of caring and mutual responsibility and accountability needed for success with today's children. The new school construction program, urgent as it is, must not be allowed to lock the city into large impersonal school buildings.

In the meantime, more effort by the central board, as well as the district boards, should be devoted to exploring immediate relief for the worst situations. Rental space for satellite primary schools, as well as arrangements with housing projects, city and non-profit agencies and local businesses are some of the options.

11 The Linkage of Governance to Restructuring

There is pressure again for the review and reform of the "governance" or decentralization structure of the New York City schools. As this report goes to press, the Marchi Commission of the New York State legislature is holding meetings to solicit sug-

gestions for recommendations to be made by the end of 1990. We believe that, while improvements are needed in the school board elections and other governance arrangements, decisions about a revision of the governance of the system should be related to the more fundamental restructuring process now being undertaken in the city.

The basic building block and focus for parent and community involvement should be the school not the district. And at the school level, the focus must be, not on school governance, but on building a collaborative relationship among all the participants. District, city, state and federal layers of governance—or any intermediate management layers between them—should all be justified and designed in terms of their capacity for assisting and ensuring productive, collaborative management and leadership at the school and local community level.

12 Adequate Education Budget and Restructuring

The success of the effort to restructure the schools depends critically on how city and state officials respond to their current serious overall budget constraints. These constraints can either cripple the effort—perhaps fatally—or they can be used as a spur for making changes that would otherwise be extremely difficult or impossible. As Chancellor Fernandez pointed out in his January, 1990, budget request: "The restructuring effort [School-Based Management and Shared Decision-Making—or SBM/SDM] will not work unless we ensure that our school system has an adequate level of basic resources."

At the same time, it will be difficult in this budget year, and perhaps several years to come, to provide the needed "basic level of resources" and the necessary costs of the new initiatives without breaking through

the normal habits of "incremental budgeting." The costs of nearly everything always goes up, and when budgets have to be cut, the natural tendency of public bureaucracies is reduce costs "across the board," or, worse, to cut services while preserving (or even increasing) bureaucratic costs. There is also a tendency to cut out any "new" expenditures that do not yet have a constituency that would complain because of their absence.

Radical restructuring of the system will require radical budget policies. Chancellor Fernandez has already announced his intention to cut bureaucratic costs— not only in response to budget constraints, but because his new management model for the system, like those in restructure corporations, calls for a "leaner" management, with fewer bureaucratic layers and more reliance on decision-making at the school level. The current budget crisis can be used to help overcome the normal resistance to this aspect of re-

structuring. Not only will more radical "debureaucratization" provide some of the funds needed to maintain basic services and facilitate changes at the school level, but it will help to convince the public, and city and state legislators, that serious change is underway and that improved services are both necessary and possible.

Public opinion surveys indicate that the public is willing to pay for effective education, so long as they are convinced that the funds will not be wasted. Restructuring, if it is "for real," can be a way of building a public constituency for providing the increased funds needed to educate our children successfully, even in a time of budget constraint. The public is beginning to realize that successful education is a necessary investment in the future of the nation. Political leaders will find they can and must support education at the levels needed to make this investment real.



Footnotes

1. *New York Times*, February 14, 1990, p.B6.
2. *Winning the Brain Race* (San Francisco, Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1988) by David T. Kearns & Denis P. Doyle, p.7.
3. *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* (Washington, DC, Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986), p.14. An extensive statement of this is contained in David S. Seeley, *Education Through Partnership* (Cambridge, MA, Ballinger, 1981).
4. *Education That Works: An Action Plan for the Education of Minorities* (Cambridge, MA, Quality Education for Minorities Project, MIT, 1990), p.45.
5. Albert Shanker, "The End of the Traditional Model of Schooling— and A Proposal for Using Incentives to Restructure Our Public Schools", *Phi Delta Kappan*, January, 1990, pp. 345, 348.
6. *Winning the Brain Race*, op. cit., p.9,8.
7. *Ibid.*, p.8,9.
8. *Ibid.*, p.13.
9. *A Nation Prepared*, Op. Cit., p.57.
10. *Time for Action* (Albany, NY, New York State Task Force on Implementing Educational Reform, 1989), p.5.
11. Jill A. Mirman, "Toward a Definition of Restructuring," (The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands, Andover, MA, 1988), p.5.
12. *Ibid.* pp. 5,4.
13. Lorraine M. McDonnell, *Restructuring American Schools: The Promise and the Pitfalls* (New York, Teachers College Columbia, Institute on Education and Economy, 1989), pp. 42,41.
14. *Time for Action*, op. cit., p.5.
15. *Ibid.*, p.5; *Winning the Brain Race*, op. cit., p.8.
16. Henry M. Levin, "Accelerated Schools for Disadvantaged Students," *Educational Leadership*, March, 1987, p.19; David S. Seeley, "A New Paradigm for Parent Involvement", *Educational Leadership*, October, 1989, p.46.
17. *Time for Action*, op. cit., p.5; *Winning the Brain Race*, *Ibid.*, p.8.
18. *New York Times*, October 1, 1989, p.E22.
19. Lorraine M. McDonnell, op. cit., p.15,42.
20. *Time for Action*, op. cit., p.3.
21. *Ibid.*, p.7.

Principals Speak on:

School Leadership

School Leadership

The interviews with the principals in this study confirm what virtually all other studies have found: Leadership is crucial to school success. But what is leadership? Despite all the research and rhetoric about its importance, it is still a somewhat elusive quality—especially in bureaucratic systems where only those things that can be measured and regulated have official status.

What these principals said about running their schools can help us understand better what leadership means in an inner-city school. They also provided valuable insights about some things that could be done to select and retain more principals who have these qualities, and to help those who are selected perform better.



Leadership Characteristics

The information gathered in this study suggests several key characteristics needed for successful school leadership: a) goal-driven, success-oriented motivation, b) capacity for motivating others for goal achievement, c) intensity, persistence, resourcefulness, and inventiveness in finding alternative ways to achieve goals when initial efforts fail, and d) hard work. They also identified: e) nurturing characteristics, and f) new characteristics required for "restructuring" schools.

Goal-Driven Motivation

Our principals gave forceful testimony to the importance of a strong commitment to a goal or mission. As Principal H said, "First of all, you have to have a clear philosophy as to where you want to go." Principal Y said, "You have to have a comprehensive view of what you are doing and where you are going." Principal J called it a "philosophy" and a sense of "mission." Principal W said, "I provide a vision of what I want it to look like."

As Principal I explained, "Commitment is an essential ingredient in relating to teachers and children . . . My commitment is that I know that children can achieve and can be successful with the right type of interest and time given to them." Principal D demonstrated her goal-orientation by constantly assessing performance in relation to her goals: "I look at how the total day goes and from day to day how it will end up affecting the children at the end of the year." Principal B demonstrated the same attitude about the importance of assessing student progress. When Principal J said that his school was "nowhere near" the achievement he was aiming for, you knew he was measuring performance against a goal, and was driven by the gap that still remained to be closed.

"Commitment is an essential ingredient in relating to teachers and children . . ."

Motivating Others

It is not enough for principals to have a strong sense of mission and keep assessing its accomplishment. They have to be able to enlist *others* in accomplishing the mission, since it is primarily these "others" who have to do the accomplishing. As pointed out by the American Association of School Administrators, leading a school may share this characteristic with managing a baseball team, as in Casey Stengel's famous quote: "Managing is getting paid for home runs someone else hits."

Principal H uses a "spiraling" strategy for motivating staff, starting with those most easily reached and moving to those more resistant: "You're going to have to develop a cadre of staff members who take a bit of ownership and say, 'Look, we can do this and such,' and are willing to network and meet to expand" the circle of staff committed to the change. He admits this may be difficult if a principal comes into a "situation where there is a failure orientation—and where the staff tends to say, 'It's not us; it's the children—you know, blame someone else. That's a common defense mechanism, and sometimes it's deeply ingrained. In order to break down that pattern, it has to happen from within—and it has to occur by networking with staff members who are positive, recognizing and rewarding them so they will extend themselves and get the message out that here is someone who is supportive of what we want to do—because basically my philosophy is that most people want to succeed."

Principal R confirmed what other principals had said about the need for *time*—time for meeting and planning, time "to be able to talk together"—but she also said, "It's not just time [that's needed]. It's the impetus. It's the encouragement. It's the pushing and suggesting and cajoling."

Principal Y used another term to explain motivation: "I think that the driving factor in most cases that makes schools succeed—I don't know if this will sound right—is *pride*: pride of the teachers in what it is they're doing."

"Once the staff internalizes this mission, they are much more likely to work for the benefit of children's education. . . "

Principal P said: "When I said committed staff I meant total commitment to the job of educating our children. And it's not just

educating them for junior high school; we're trying to prepare our children for adult life." Once the staff internalizes this mission, she said, they are much more likely to work for the benefit of children's education and much less likely to guide their behavior by their own creature comforts or slavish adherence to the contract. She was very proud that this is the way teachers behaved in her school.

Principal W told a story emphasizing that special efforts have to be made to ensure that students and parents, as well as staff, are motivated to help accomplish the school's mission: When she questioned a boy getting into trouble for not doing his homework, it turned out he was helping his mother clean houses ("because she's pregnant and they're big houses") and delivering papers. "We then developed a plan around this kid to motivate him to do the work. We talked to the mother and got him off the other work. We set up a little contractual system for him that if he did the work he would become a monitor. And it motivated him and got him on the road." If it's successful learning, we want, and not just "successful" teaching, a principal has to be able to motivate students and parents as well as teachers.

Intensity, Persistence, and Resourcefulness

It's not enough to have a mission and motivate others to achieve it. Peters and Waterman in their research on excellent companies identify another ingredient: "intensity"—it's the *intensity* with which you do these things that makes the difference in successful leadership. That intensity can show up in being willing to keep trying different things until you succeed, in having the resourcefulness to be able to invent alternative "ways to skin a cat," in being willing to fight for your goal when you have to, and in being thoughtful and reflective when there's a real puzzle that requires intellectual as well as administrative effort.

We get a strong sense from these interviews that this kind of "intensity" is particularly needed in leading inner-city schools, where there are so many obstacles to over-

come—so many opportunities to fail in the process of trying to succeed.

"The sense that you want the youngsters to succeed, and you will do anything to help the kids is what really drives successful schools," said Principal Y. He provided an example of how this "driving" intensity can affect a school when asked whether "teaching to the test" results in losing many weeks of precious time as other principals had complained. He agreed, but he added that "if you let testing become the driving engine of the school," it can easily displace your educational goals. His message was that you just have to keep focusing on your real goals, your mission, and not let *anything* get in the way.

Principal B expressed a similar kind of "stick to your goals" attitude with regard to "shared decision-making," which had developed in New York City in a way she didn't particularly like. "I could talk to you all day about the motives of the union and the whole thing of teacher empowerment, and why the Board of Education, or whoever it was, threw away the baby with the bath water and gave all of this power away to—to

"The sense that you want the youngsters to succeed, and you will do anything to help the kids is what really drives successful schools."

other than the client." But, "being stuck with it," she decided to see how it could best be used to further her mission for the school: "Shared decision-making may do something to get the teachers to see that they make the quintessential difference. The Coleman Report—another one of those 'miracle' reports, right?—had taught them that they didn't make the quintessential difference—that the home made the quintessential difference—that the most important factor in whether a set of kids learn in a school is not the school and its teachers, but the home."

She decided that shared decision-making could help correct this attitude and help teachers see that they can and must make a difference. So, "you have to look at it for all the good that you can get out of it and get that out of it, and leave the rest behind. I would go crazy if I looked at peoples' motives."

[The principalship] "is an executive job: If you can't do all that you would like to, you have to prioritize and do your best."

She expressed a similar attitude in saying that the principalship "is an executive job: If you can't do all that you would like to, you have to prioritize and do your best." And, again, "You've got to be able to look at your problem and come to a solution that will get you and your kids over the hurdle."

The "resourcefulness" side of leadership in pursuing goals can be seen in an incident related by one principal. After describing a particularly grizzly situation in which the children found a dead body in the school yard, she went on: "It was at that point that I became active—and here again I honestly believe this is the mark of a good principal: When you see a problem that is going to really affect your school, you have to find a way to relate to that problem that puts it on the road to success. It's irrelevant that it's going to take a long time and that there's no light that you can see at the end of the tunnel—that's irrelevant. It's irrelevant that as far as you're concerned somebody else doing the job could be much more effective—you just have to start to deal with the problem. If you conceive of yourself as a leader, you have to act like it. So I got in touch with the police commander, and I convinced him he wanted to resolve this problem. And together we made a standing committee with the drug committee of the school board, the Sanitation Department, the Parks Department, and all the various agencies."

The "fighting" side of intensity was displayed by Principal D in discussing how she gets rid of inadequate staff despite bureaucratic obstructions of the system: "Either they can cut the mustard, or they find themselves going out the door. If they decide they want to fight with me, they end up losing, because I'm not a loser; I can't afford to be. I set the tone for this school. If I am weak, then everybody that comes underneath me becomes weak." She made clear elsewhere in the interview that she wasn't talking about just being belligerent for the sake of appearing strong; she was being strong for the sake of achieving her mission: "It starts with who I am. Who is this lady who is heading this school? And what is her mission? What is her vision? What does she wish for these children? I want every child to have the best education that they possibly can. They've got to feel like they're somebody in order to get that, and I have the responsibility of making sure that in this institution every teacher is teaching the maximum number of hours and giving the highest quality instruction that every child can possibly get. . . . If some teachers can't buy into this mission—that the children can learn and that they really, really can be somebody—then they have to get off this bandwagon because they can't stay here with me!"

"If they decide they want to fight with me, they end up losing, because I'm not a loser; I can't afford to be."

This same principal, by the way, also made clear that there are times for curbing belligerence—again for the sake of the mission: "One has to set the tone for children and teachers. I try to make it my business not to upset my teachers and have a confrontation with them first thing in the morning. They're going to leave my office and go into the classroom and affect 35 lives! It means that sometimes I've got to humble myself

and bite my tongue, rather than deal" with an issue at a time when it's going to end up upsetting the children.

"... it's not only teachers who have to be motivated; special efforts have to be made to ensure that students and parents, as well as staff, are motivated to help accomplish the school's mission: . . ."

Hard Work

Good principals work hard. The motto, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again," has special relevance in inner-city schools. Since so many things don't succeed, there has to be a lot of trying. "I tend to get to work every day before 7:00 a.m.," said Principal C, and "I can be here at least three times a week until about 6:00 p.m. . . . and a lot of work on weekends." Principal P says she is on the job usually from 7:45 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. every day, "and I'm going in Saturday to get some paperwork done." Principal G says she works normally 55 to 60 hours a week. Principal P said that her kind of commitment "requires a lot of time—and that means that I'm here early and I'm here late, and so is the Assistant Principal."

Principal T, who gets to school early so he can get the day organized before school starts at 8:40 a.m., expressed understandable annoyance that with that kind of work pressure he had to take time to supervise the breakfast and lunch period. Yet in complaining about this, he also confirmed again that it is goals and commitment that drive his work: "To run a lunch program you have to be a strong person. You cannot be a mamsy-pamsy or you're going to have chaos in there. I have not found anyone—and I'm not bragging when I say this—who is strong enough to deal with tough inner-city school kids and run a cafeteria where you see order and

discipline—where you see children in control and not in chaos. And I haven't found that, so I have to do it."

Nurturing Characteristics

While leadership traits discussed thus far are similar to those found necessary for successful leadership of many kinds of organizations, there are some special characteristics of schools that add other dimensions to their leadership. The most important of these have to do with the fact that schools deal with *children*—and parents.

Principal D explained how she might have "to stop in the middle of going in to observe a teacher, to take care of a little boy who feels nobody cares about him—or the other children are laughing at him because he doesn't have on the right kind of sneakers—the name brand that's accepted. And he's ready to kill them, or he's ready to explode all day long and nobody in the world will listen to him. Or I might have a child who is coming to see me because he'd had a death in the family, or the children are calling him 'Frenchy' or 'Haitian' or whatever. Children need nurturing, and that takes time. This is a situation that nobody understands in terms of what a principal does. . . . I'm the mother hen here."

Principal D also made clear that the "mother hen" role might have to cover adults as well as children—especially in the desperate conditions confronting inner-city schools: "Nobody can tell me I'm not doing my job when I can't have a pre-conference with a teacher because I have to deal with a crying father who has come in because he's having problems with his wife and the two of them are having a divorce and he needs somebody to talk to."

Principal F didn't use the term "mother hen," but she had a similar concept of her job: "I know there are schools where the kids never come to the principal's office. He doesn't even know one kid from the next. I mean they have no feeling that there has to be—how shall I put it?—a 'family feeling' about the school. Their concept of the principalship is different from mine. I'm not saying it's wrong, but it's certainly different."

Principal T, who found himself providing suicide prevention counseling to a distraught parent one day on the steps of the local police precinct, said, "You know? You wear a million hats in this job."

New Demands on the Principalship

New demands are now changing the principal's job in important ways. The most important of these relate to the "restructuring" of schooling, and particularly the trend toward a more collegial model. What characteristics or styles of leadership will be important in the future for dealing with these new relationships?

Some of the principals pointed to self-confidence as an especially important trait: If principals "come in not fully confident, not fully knowing what to do, then they're going to have great difficulty" with shared decision-making, said Principal H. Principal J thought that the "leader is able, because of his very strength and confidence, to involve staff to the maximum of their willingness." "I don't mind being outvoted," said Principal Q; "If you can show me that your plan is better than my plan, I don't care who conceived the idea or the plan. What we want is something that is going to work," (again showing how goal-orientation helps people rise above power struggles). Principal V said he was not threatened by having "very powerful staff who have the respect of their colleagues; they're informal leaders."

"Children need nurturing, and that takes time. This is a situation that nobody understands in terms of what a principal does. . . . I'm the mother hen here."

Several principals made it clear, however, that a principal cannot be passive in these new relationships: "Leadership means to lead," said Principal J. Shared decision-

making and collegiality won't work if you have principals who "aren't able to sell their concepts and ideas of leadership. . . or to create an organization in which the principal and staff and everybody are in a harmonious type of direction and on the same mission." There must be "consensus" and "a purpose and a directionality." Principal W was proud that in her school, "There's a sense of unity as a school," and she reported that, as a result, "people like working here; people don't want to leave here" even though it is in a tough area.

Principal J said, "I wouldn't want to see a principal sitting and saying, 'Gee, I wonder what we're going to do in reading this year? I do hope that committee will come out with a report soon so that I can know which direction we're going.' . . Now, I'm being a little tongue in cheek, but basically I think the principal has to throw out ideas, . . to charge these committees with philoso-

favor of what classroom teachers feel is important, which is somewhat different from the way I feel is important. But I felt, since they're the guys who work with it on a day-in and day-out basis, we ought to reach some kind of a compromise."

It was clear that in these principals' minds, "compromise" was not a matter of giving up on their goals, but rather the way to achieve them. They were seeing a teacher's sense of ownership and professional responsibility as an important factor in their motivation and effectiveness.



Selecting and Keeping Better Principals

How well does New York City do in selecting principals who have the qualities discussed above?

"If you can show me that your plan is better than my plan, I don't care who conceived the idea or the plan. What we want is something that is going to work."

Some principals in this study indicated that there were a number of schools in their districts with inadequate principals. They were very aware of the damage that can be done to a school and its children by an ineffective principal. Principal W told of a school which was not run well and "it showed in the scores." Principal KK put her finger on how this damage is done: "A poor principal leads to a demoralization of the staff." Principal F, believing that the public image of the schools and principals is a "holy mess," said that "a lot of that is justified. The schools in many instances are not doing what they are supposed to."

phy, mission, direction. And I think then the committees in that kind of relationship should feel free to move back and give the principal new ideas, new concepts, or expansions beyond what he had thought. . ."

They saw the need for principals to be strong and forceful—but not necessarily uncompromising: "I believe in the art of compromise," said Principal Q in explaining how she saw a collegial system working. Principal AA saw it as a matter of "a balance between . . . the programs the principal feels are important and those that the staff feel are important. . . We've made compromises over the years," he explained: "The present way in which we organize classes, for instance, had been modified in

The principals were often blunt in their condemnation of the present procedures by which principals are selected: Principal Q, herself a minority group member, reported that in her district "a school administrator is selected because he belongs to this or that ethnic group, or because he knows a community school board member. They're not selected on their ability. . . It's really criminal," she protested. "Criminal" was also the term used by Principal H to describe the "political selections of people to head schools, some of whom have had no experience along the career ladder—it's extremely detrimental

to the well-being of education. Many of them are drowning." Principal X said, "I have five teachers with principal licences in this school who I know would make wonderful principals, yet they will never get a principal's job because they are not involved in the politics. That's it! And I tell them, unless you get involved you're not going to get a job." Principal U drew the logical conclusion: "If politics is the criterion for hiring, why *wouldn't* you have weak principals?"

Principal V, who is in a nearly all-minority school in a white dominated district, saw the "politics" of appointments in a somewhat different light: "A principal is very important in running a school, and . . . there is no effort to make sure that minority children get the type of leadership they deserve . . . I don't think that anybody really cares what happens to these children in our district . . . We are not able to control our own destiny . . . We are controlled by people who are not of this particular area."

"If politics is the criterion for hiring, why *wouldn't* you have weak principals?"

Principal D, highly critical of the way in which some community school boards are improperly influenced in making selections: "If we had the right kind of community school boards, and if the central board of education were doing what they're supposed to do in making appointments for the high schools, and doing it correctly, then there wouldn't be so much criticism that candidates are being put in on a political basis rather than on a qualification basis. That's really important."

Passing Tests is Not Enough

While a number of the principals complained of the "political" appointments, Principal R pointed out that the examinations which are supposed to prevent these abuses in New York City are no solution either: "People get jobs because they pass tests, and

that cannot be the sole criterion for appointing a person to lead any organization. It's not in other organizations. It's not in business organizations— and not even in foundations or anything like that. You have to have a track record, capability, references, and everything else." Principal J said, "I don't think the interview process is the only way" either, because "anybody can talk a good game."

" People get jobs because they pass tests, and that cannot be the sole criterion for appointing a person to lead any organization. It's not in other organizations... You have to have a track record, capability, references, and everything else."

Instead of reliance on examinations, Principal M suggested that "one of the most important things about selecting a principal is that they have to be seen on the job," and if they are not now serving in a school, but in an office job, they shouldn't be selected at all until they have been put in an assistant principal's position for a period: "The difference of working in an office and heading a school is monumental."

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Dealing with Inadequate Principals

Recognizing the imperfections of perhaps any selection process, Principal J suggested that more emphasis be placed on the "safeguard" of evaluating those appointed during their probationary period to see "whether they can do the job." He and Principal I expressed dissatisfaction that so many principals were allowed to stay on the job in New York even when it was clear that their selection was a mistake.

Principal T did not limit this responsibility to evaluating only new principals. As with all professions, he pointed out, "there are good principals and there are some who should not even be principals, okay? . . . A superintendent has the responsibility—the obligation—to see what a principal is doing and . . . if he sees a principal who's incompetent, he should assume the responsibility for rating that principal and doing what has to be done."

Principal X also saw district superintendents falling down on this responsibility: If there's "a principal who may not be doing his job, it's the job of the superintendent to make sure. Do they make sure? Why do you think the whole system is falling apart? Because no one is making sure of anything anymore. It's passing the buck."



Support for Principals On the Job

When asked what could be done to lessen the harmful effects on children's education given an inexperienced or inadequate principal, the principals suggested various kinds of training and supports.

In addressing the poorly selected principals who are "overwhelmed" by the job and "drowning," Principal H suggested "principal mentors—skillful principals who know how to manage and operate the school . . . who have clear vision and know how to work with people to elicit from them the kind of support you need to move programs." He recognized that this might be "a delicate kind of thing, because it is assumed that once you've reached the principalship—the epitome of leadership—all knowledge has to flow from you." He estimated that more than half the principals in his district need this kind of support.

Principal Q suggested that "retired administrators could be hired to work with the less effective administrators. I think that would be marvelous."

Principal X saw it as primarily the responsibility of the district superintendent to

help and monitor the weak principals appointed through political influence: to sit down with them and say, "Okay, now you have this school, and according to our records it needs improvement in these areas. Now let's sit together and make a little plan about these areas"—then follow up each month to see how well the plan is being implemented.

"Why do you think the whole system is falling apart? Because no one is making sure of anything anymore. It's passing the buck."

Many of the principals felt supports are needed even for well-selected principals, especially in their first year or two.

"A support system," was Principal M's immediate answer as to how to improve the performance of those appointed. "They have mentors now for teachers; there should be a mentoring program for new principals—even more so than for teachers. A teacher, if she doesn't have a mentor, has a buddy right next door. The principal is sitting in that office all alone." She suggested that the mentor be available for at least the first year.

"The difference between working in an office and heading a school is monumental."

"Any new person becoming a principal needs to find out what's the best way of handling things," explained Principal I. "You can't just be left to sink or swim. Mentoring is important."

Principal F agreed: "There has to be—in the same way that teachers have to get on-

going day-to-day training—that's what has to happen with principals." She agreed with Principal X on who should provide this support: "Isn't that part of the deputy superintendent's job? or the superintendent's? I mean, let's tell it like it is. These are the people who are supposed to train principals. I'm being very candid with you." She says they don't do this in her district, and compared the school system's poor performance in this regard with a well run business which will make sure their supervisors know their job. "It's counterproductive not to help those people learn their business; it's counterproductive," she repeated. Principal P agreed that this is the district superintendent's job: They're the "supervisors of principals."

"I think that after selection, there's got to be ongoing staff development and training for the principals," said Principal G; "constant interaction with other principals, exposure to leadership workshops, helping these people set their goals and objectives for their schools, knowing there's somebody to support them....Principal mentors are exactly what would be needed."

"I'm a new principal," said one principal, and "nobody has ever sat with me and helped me to interpret the teacher union contract. Have you ever tried to read the contract? For new or weak principals, Principal KK suggested having them "shadow another principal for a week," just as she does with her new teachers.

Principal C also agreed that this support is needed not just for the less capable new principals: "It isn't a matter of just weaker principals: I need help. Somebody to talk to; somebody to bounce my ideas off would certainly be helpful." "Once one becomes a principal, does that mean that one is the perfect educator, and so consequently training stops?" asked Principal I. "I don't think it means that. Training for anyone is a continuous process. Principals need to continue to go to conferences to be updated. They need to have greater exchange among one another."

As a New York City principal who is not

in this study pointed out: "Bingo, you're a principal; therefore you stop learning? You don't need help anymore? You don't have any problems? That's what people think—that's the model that we've created: You get to the top; you're a principal. You're top of the hill. But I don't see it that way. Not only is the evaluation poor, but there is no supervision, and there's no support system for them. It's a very complicated job, and we're setting them up to fail."

"They have mentors now for teachers; there should be a mentoring program for new principals—even more so than for teachers."

Sharing of Ideas

Principal D saw the sharing of ideas as an important ingredient of continued leadership: "I think that what one needs to do is what we're doing at the Center for Educational Leadership (a leadership project sponsored by New York Urban Coalition), which is to get together and share." Principal F said, "Successful schools should be exchanging literature and exchanging ideas, and principals should have opportunities to talk to one another. We go to principals' conferences once a month, and the superintendent gives us directives on what he's done, but it's very rare that you have a chance to talk about procedures you use, or administrative techniques."

Principal H urged that there be a "Supercenter" for appointed principals along the lines of the one that has been set up to prepare assistant principals to become principals.

Principal T said that a new Principals Center was beginning to meet this need in his area: "I have attended only one of their meetings, but I found it very, very interesting to see that other principals in other schools in the city share many of my con-

cerns. I have an opportunity to see how they have dealt with certain problems that I'm grappling with, and I think that that kind of sharing among principals is an invaluable experience."

"There should be on-going staff development, constant interaction with other principals, exposure to leadership workshops, and leadership training to help them set goals and objectives," said Principal G. "They have to know there's somebody there to support them."

Although there was widespread support among the principals for training and support for principals, Principal B raised a problem: "Well, it would help," she said, "if they wanted the help, but most of them, you know, don't. That's a problem." It's a problem, of course, that leads back to the selection process. Quite clearly, "willingness to learn" needs to be one of the criteria for selection.

Support Staff for Principals

Some of the principals talked about other kinds of support needed for good leadership from principals beside training, mentoring, and workshops. "I have no time for educational leadership. Who's kidding who? When I started out I was the educational leader of this school, but now you know what we are? We're not leaders. We're managers. We schedule programs. We schedule people. We shift. We fill out papers and forms. . . I know I am skilled at teaching teachers how to teach, but how can I do that when I can't get out of my office?"

Many of the principals cited the lack of support staff as one important obstacle to their success: "Yesterday I started the day by listening to a mother cry because her child has to be suspended," related Principal N; "she's on probation on her job and has no one to take care of him. That took an hour."

**"You can't just be left
to sink or swim.
Mentoring is important."**

A number of the principals said that to be effective they needed another assistant principal, business manager, administrative assistant, or some combination of these. Many of them saw the need for extra help either to provide adequate assistance and supervision for their teachers, or to free them or their (usually at best) one assistant principal to provide such assistance.

**"Once one becomes
a principal, does that
mean that one is
the perfect educator,
and so consequently
training stops?"**

Principal N said she didn't even have a trained secretary—just a family assistant who "should be making home visits" who acts as a secretary. Another said his secretarial help was "at a very low level of competence." Yet another said that the lack of secretarial help required her to do all the payroll and pupil accounting paperwork herself.

Too Much Paper Work

The "horrendous" paperwork demands were mentioned by many as a major reason for needing extra administrative staff. "The Central Board has killed too many trees," Principal P remarked wryly, and she went on to talk about "proliferating reports and unnecessary duplication of reports using the same data." Principal M related how, "The Board spits out papers and reports! The district office spits out papers and reports! And, if you're a Chapter 1 school, the federal government and the state government spit out reports! Many times, the same information is asked for. I often wonder if a lot of the paper work isn't spewed out because some people have to justify their jobs!"

Of course, Principal U pointed out that maybe the solution is "not to get more people

**"We're not leaders.
We're managers... We fill out
papers and forms... "**

to do the paperwork, but to eliminate the paperwork." Nevertheless, the overwhelming

testimony of most of these principals was that from a practical point view, in terms of both the community and bureaucratic conditions in which they work, additional support staff was essential if principals—even good, committed and very hard working ones—are to be able to provide the leadership needed to make schools truly successful.



A New Focus on Leadership

A New Focus on Leadership

However obvious the importance of leadership may be for schools in general, it is absolutely essential for inner-city schools. These schools cannot count on the stable, self-directed professional staff, the body of politically empowered parents, and the sense of common purpose and goals that might carry a suburban school for a year or two under a weak principal. They either have strong and effective leadership, or the quality of education, and even the physical safety and well being of the children and teachers, will deteriorate—almost immediately. Strong effective leadership is a *sine qua non* for successful education in the inner-city.

There is an additional new reason for focusing on leadership in the years ahead: The "restructuring" of public education discussed in the previous chapter will require new types of leadership at the school level. Everything in the proposals for restructuring points to the school as the critical unit for renewal and productivity, and it is folly to think that the ultimate shape of "restructured" schools can be worked out solely by study commissions, legislatures and mandates from above, without strong and resourceful leaders at the school level. As the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration pointed out: "A revolution in education requires competent, skilled, visionary leadership as has never been available before." There must be a "restructuring of a national understanding of requirements for educational leadership of the future," with "awesome and exciting differences . . . in the responsibilities of school administrators and in the skills they would need." [1]

Although a collegial model calls for leadership from all participants, this section will focus on the principalship. Despite its many excellent principals, New York City, like most urban school systems, is failing to

provide the kind and level of leadership needed for restructured schools. There are various reasons for this, and it is an uncomfortable issue to deal with, but if society is serious about the goal of successful education of all its children regardless of social background, the issue must not only be confronted but given the highest priority.

The principals in this study have provided important insights on this issue that can help in formulating sound public policy. Our analysis of the issues they raise suggests policy options in three main areas: improved selection procedures; support for principals on the job; removal of inadequate principals.



Improved Selection Procedures

The principals in this study highlighted several key characteristics of leadership needed by urban elementary school principals, outlined in the section above on Leadership Characteristics: a) goal-driven, success-oriented motivation, b) ability to motivate others, c) intensity, persistence and resourcefulness, d) capacity for hard work, e) nurturing qualities, f) the self-confidence and negotiating skills needed for the new collegial and collaborative management models.

These characteristics are similar to those found by other observers and researchers, especially in being hard to define in concrete terms. The Council of Supervisors and Administrators (CSA) says that "above all," principals must be "personal leaders gaining general support and respect because of their vision, ability, and integrity . . ." The National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration says that principals must (a) help schools become "learning communities," (b) "foster collegiality," (c) ensure suc-

cess for all children, and (d) encourage involvement of parents and community. The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) says that school leaders must "put heavy emphasis on the intangibles of vision, values, and motivation; and understand intuitively the non-rational and unconscious elements in the leader-constituent interaction." [2]

The Dinkins Education Task Force concluded that the "single characteristic that sets effective principals apart is that they do not merely react—they act! . . . They are able to figure out what needs to be done in the face of uncertainty, complexity and information overload. And they are able to get things done even though they must rely on a large and diverse group of people over whom they may have little control." [3] The 1987 ASCD Yearbook, entitled *Leadership: Examining the Elusive*, speaks of the importance of a "sense of vision," the "ability to communicate intent and meaning," and the ability to develop a "coordinated and cooperative" school climate and "the kind of culture that supports high levels of motivation and learning." [4]

Unfortunately there is no magic system for determining which candidates for a principalship have these "elusive" characteristics. Although tests and interviews play a part in the selection process, they are not reliable methods for judging these complex qualities. We believe that much more focus has to be given to this problem.

Several policy options are suggested by our analysis of this top-priority issue:

1 Greater Consideration of Leadership Qualities

The procedures for selection of principals

should require that community school boards, screening committees, and superintendents selecting candidates for principalships or other leadership positions give much more careful consideration to the complex and "elusive" qualities highlighted by the principals in this study and by others who have looked at the leadership needs of our schools. Too often appointing authorities list the more "objective" characteristics, such as credentials and years of experience, and then lump the less objective characteristics under generalized headings such as "strong leadership," "commitment," and "competence," which can mean many different things to different people. Giving more attention to, and being more specific about these leadership qualities will help identify more clearly what is being looked for in the candidates.

2 Publish Specific Leadership Criteria

Having discussed and agreed to the qualities being sought, these should be made public with as much specificity as possible, so that the appointing authority can be held accountable by measuring the candidates selected against the announced criteria, and so that candidates themselves can measure themselves against what is being looked for.

3 Establish Better Procedures for Assessing Leadership Qualities

These might include: a) independent, skilled and experienced screening committees, b) collaboration with the staff and parents of the school, both in defining the qualities needed for the particular vacancy and in judging the candidates for those qualities, c) a thorough search for *evidence* that candidates have demonstrated the required quali-

ties in their past and present jobs and associations (This would normally include site visits to candidates' current assignments), d) self-selection by candidates, making clear to them that the published leadership criteria are a prime requirement for the job, and e) informing them that there will be a rigorous probationary evaluation, to discourage those who might hope to get appointed without having to live up to leadership expectations.

4 Technical Assistance for Selection

The Chancellor should call upon a consortium of corporations and universities to provide technical assistance to community school boards and screening committees in their selection process. Many businesses spend tens of thousands of dollars to help them find "the right person for the job." The need for such technical assistance in finding the very best leadership for each school is no less important.

A program for providing such assistance could condition its services on: a) a formal resolution by the community school board or other appointing authority to make leadership qualities prime criteria for selection of principals, b) the commitment of time and resources for discussion and assessment of leadership qualities, and c) agreement to publicize the leadership qualities to be used in making selections.

5 Responsibilities of Parent, Teacher, and Civic Groups

Parent, teacher and civic groups often complain only after a poor appointment has been made. Procedures such as those outlined above give such groups an opportunity to monitor the process before a selection is made. They can check to see if techni-

cal assistance is being sought and received, if the appointing authority meets the criteria to be eligible for such assistance, if it has established effective screening criteria, committees and procedures. They can also provide competent and conscientious volunteers to serve on screening and interviewing committees. This is a good area for cooperation among such education constituency groups.

6 Investigate Improper Appointments

As recommended by the Dinkins Education Task Force, the Inspector General should investigate all charges of impropriety in the selection of principals and assistant principals swiftly and thoroughly, and should review appointment procedures on his own initiative. The publication of leadership criteria for selection and the documentation of the selection process in assessing candidates against these criteria should make it easier to demonstrate if candidates are selected for political or other improper reasons.

Again, none of these steps can guarantee good selections, but they should increase the chances of providing schools with the leadership so essential to their success.

7 Long-Range Development of Future Leaders

In addition to improvements in the procedures, New York should develop a better system of "grooming" leaders and assessing them in various ways in the course of a series of training and internship experiences, such as recommended by the Dinkins Education Task Force. [5] This would hold more promise of identifying potential leaders with these qualities than the present testing and interviewing procedures used in New York City.



Support for Principals

The principals in this study suggested that help was needed by both new and more experienced principals:

8 Support for New Principals

Given the complex demands and extreme importance of the job, all new principals should be given intensive, on-the-job training, mentoring, and supervision to make sure that all possible steps are taken to help them function well. Even the best candidates are likely to need help in various areas.

9 Support for Experienced Principals

Especially during the coming years, when roles and relationships will be changing, it will be important for all principals to continue their professional development and exchange of ideas with each other. The new principal or leadership centers should be helpful for this. However, additional ways must be found to improve the performance of weaker tenured principals. Principals in this study suggested that district superintendents could appoint experienced supervisors to work closely with such principals.

10 Support Staff for Principals

In addition to mentoring and training needs, the principals also reported inadequate support staffs—lack of A.P.'s, guidance staff, and secretaries, for example. It makes little sense to appoint a highly competent leader on whose performance the suc-

cess of the school depends, and then fail to provide them with the staff support they need to do their job. We recommend that help be asked from the business community to study what kind of staff support principals need to be able to perform their jobs efficiently and effectively, both in general and in individual schools, keeping in mind, however, that schools are different from businesses and have different needs. We are convinced that computers and other new technology, which are now finally being introduced on a wider scale in New York schools, hold promise of reducing paperwork and improving information systems.

11 Policy Support for Principals

Selecting strong leaders and then treating them like bureaucratic "middle managers" is contradictory and self-defeating. Superintendents, school boards, and city and state bureaucracies all need to adjust their practices to encourage rather than stifle leadership at the school level. This means that results, both in terms of student achievement and in building strong teamwork of teachers, parents, students and community must become more highly valued, and paperwork and bureaucratic procedures deemphasized.



Removing Inadequate Principals

The principals in this study did not dwell on the procedures needed for removing principals who cannot do an adequate job. Yet they were aware that too many schools do not have the leadership they need. This was evidenced in their extreme dissatisfaction with the current selection procedures. It is also clear from some of their comments,

such as, "You have principals who are just marking time, waiting until retirement; they couldn't care less," and from their assessments of the number of principals who need extensive help and supports. They expressed particular concern over the lack of sufficient action being taken by the system to deal with these situations. At the same time they saw the need for treating principals fairly in any process requiring disciplining.

The principals who addressed this problem in the interviews saw the district superintendent as the locus of responsibility for taking the necessary action with regard to elementary and intermediate school administrators. We agree, which leads to a recommendation in Option 14 below under "District Action for Principals Performance."

There are reasons, however, why district superintendents often fail to carry out this important responsibility. The reason most commonly cited relates to the cumbersome procedures currently required for removing a principal. As one principal remarked, "It doesn't make any difference" whether principals are evaluated, "because there is nothing you can do" about removing them. We take some exception to that comment, since, there are other actions beside removal a superintendent can take if a principal's performance is found wanting; and, if enough time and energy is expended, an extremely and obviously incompetent principal can be removed. But this exception points to a more fundamental reason why superintendents often fail to fulfill their responsibilities for removing inadequate principals: The whole policy framework of the system on this subject is thrown out of joint by the tendency to equate the removal of a principal to a criminal proceeding. Removal is seen as a "sanction" which can be applied only after the most extensive "due process" has proved beyond a reasonable doubt that

the incumbent has committed grievous misdeeds worthy of such "punishment." The present cumbersome procedures are thus merely a product of this much deeper policy framework problem.

The Municipal Affairs Committee of the New York City Bar Association, noting the extreme difficulty of removing inadequate principals and the tiny number actually removed over the years, has recently reviewed the procedures for removal of principals in New York City and has made useful recommendations for their improvement which we endorse in Option 13 below under "Bar Association Recommendations as Interim Step". But the Bar Association report did not adequately deal with the educational policy issue of the *framework* within which this issue is currently couched. Everything this study has told us, and other studies have confirmed, about the crucial role of the principal, the nature of leadership qualities needed to fulfill it, the difficulties of selecting the right candidate, and the importance of the "fit" between principal and the needs and "chemistry" of a particular school, lead us to conclude that the policy framework for dealing with the removal of principals must be changed.

The framework must be changed from a "crime and punishment" framework to a "optimal functioning" framework. When a principal needs to be removed from a school, this should not routinely be treated as a "punishment" or a "sanction." It may simply represent a mistake in selection, or a change in conditions in the school, or in the principal, which makes him or her no longer able to provide the necessary leadership for a school. Indeed, it should not be necessary to demonstrate that the principal is even "incompetent," so long as the school could be appreciably better led for the benefit of children's education by someone else.

The present "crime and punishment" modality has presumably developed over the years in the name of "fairness" to incumbents and to guard against abuses by corrupt or incompetent superintendents and school boards. But it is not necessarily fair to principals to have to treat them as near-criminals in order to give them a different assignment. And it is certainly not fair to either children or teachers to leave someone in charge of a school who cannot provide it with the leadership necessary for its successful operation. Indeed, it is not only not fair, but it is so obviously detrimental to the public welfare and to society's need for successful education, that we cannot imagine that holding to the "crime and punishment" mode makes any sense in today's world.

Seymour Fliegel, former Deputy Superintendent in Community School District 4, in explaining the origins of that district's highly publicized "choice" system, said, "Our problem was that we had principals who couldn't lead, and we couldn't get rid of them, so we had to find some way to circumvent them." A school system organized for successful education of children cannot tolerate such an absurd situation.

12 A New Framework and New Procedures for Removing Principals

Policy options to deal with these problems might include: As part of their overall policy to restructure New York City Schools to achieve "success for all children" and to ensure strong leadership in every school to accomplish this goal, a task force should be established, representing the community school boards and superintendents, principals, teachers, and education advocacy groups, to develop procedures to implement this new framework for removing principals who can't fulfill this role. The task force

would propose procedures to assure validity and fairness in making the necessary determinations and to protect against corruption and abuses.

A step in the right direction in developing a new policy framework for removing principals is the provision in the agreement between Chancellor Fernandez and the CSA on "building tenure" which states that the transfer of a principal under the new policies "shall not be deemed to be punitive or the result of the imposition of discipline."

We are not prepared to recommend that principals be appointed only on limited-term contracts (e.g. for 3 or 4 years), such as has recently been instituted in Chicago, but this option should be among those considered, and the procedures adopted should make clear—at least as clear as such a contractual system can—that assuring the quality of leadership in charge of each school is the paramount consideration. The procedures might include peer counseling in working out alternative assignments and the possibility of financial settlements for incumbents in some cases of removal where fairness seems to dictate this.

If the task force cannot hammer out a mutually acceptable new approach within six months to recommend to the Chancellor and the legislature, then the Chancellor should proceed on his own to recommend whatever changes in law, regulation or contract are needed to implement the new policy.

13 Bar Association Recommendations as Interim Step

We urge the New York State legislature in the meanwhile to adopt the recommendations of the New York City Bar

Association's Committee on Municipal Affairs as an immediate corrective for the present untenable system. These include: Having the hearings conducted by administrative law judges, rather than three-member panels; having the chief executive officers of the system, rather than the hearing officer, take action on the findings of the hearing, and allowing the incumbent's record over the previous three years to be reviewed, as in all other school districts, rather than the record of only the previous six months. Many of these recommendations might be worked into the new policies developed as a result of the task force recommended above, but the task force should not be precluded from developing more creative procedures compatible with the new policy framework of "optimal staffing."

14 District Action for Principal Performance

Each community school board should establish with its superintendent, in consultation with the parents, teachers, and principals, a procedure for reviewing the leadership performance and management plans of all the schools in the district on a continuing basis to assure that every school has a competent and committed principal and management team which can work together effectively. District superintendents should be held accountable by their school boards, as one of their primary responsibilities, for making sure that the plan is implemented and that the appropriate actions are taken when a school is found wanting in this most essential aspect of successful schooling.



Footnotes

1. National Commission on Excellence in Education Administration, *Leaders for America's Schools* (University Council for Educational Administration, 1987), pp. xvii, 5.

2. Council of Supervisors and Administrators *Toward Excellence in Urban Public Schools* (New York, 1988), p. 4; *Leaders for America's Schools*, op. cit., pp. 4,5; American Association of School Administrators, *Challenges for School Leaders* (Arlington, VA, 1988), p. 7.

3. Manhattan Borough President's Task Force on Education and Decentralization, *People Change Schools* (New York, 1989), p. 39.

4. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, *Leadership: Examining the Exclusive* (Alexandria, VA, 1987 Yearbook), pp.v,vi. See also Sergiovanni and Moore, Eds., *Schooling For Tomorrow* (Boston, Allyn & Bacon, 1989).

5. *People Change Schools*, op. cit., pp. 48-52.

END

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